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HEADLINE	07/22 Japan plan: release Fukushima water to sea
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/japan-regulators-approve-release-fukushima-water-into-sea-2022-07-22/
GIST	TOKYO, July 22 (Reuters) - Japan's nuclear regulators have approved a plan to release into the ocean water from the wrecked Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant, the government said on Friday.

	<p>The water, used to cool reactors in the aftermath of the 2011 nuclear disaster, is being stored in huge tanks in the plant, and amounted to more than 1.3 million tonnes by July.</p> <p>The regulators deemed it safe to release the water, which will still contain traces of tritium after treatment, the foreign ministry said in a statement.</p> <p>Plant operator Tokyo Power Electric Company will face additional inspections by regulators, it added.</p> <p>Tepco plans to filter the contaminated water to remove harmful isotopes apart from tritium, which is hard to remove. Then it will be diluted and released to free up plant space and allow decommissioning to continue.</p> <p>The plan has encountered stiff resistance from fishing unions in the region which fear its impact on their livelihoods. Neighbours China, South Korea, and Taiwan have also voiced concern.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/22 Russia strikes school in east Ukraine
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-strikes-black-sea-kharkiv-3e10f17c3e0015abaf2f6d1f0e443bdd
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian emergency workers recovered three bodies from a school hit by a Russian strike in the east of the country, officials said Friday, as attacks continued in several parts of the nation.</p> <p>The reported casualties follow a barrage Thursday on a densely populated area of Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, that killed at least three people and wounded 23 others.</p> <p>In a rare sign of light, the signing was expected Friday of an accord that would allow Ukraine to resume its shipments of grain across the Black Sea and Russia to export grain and fertilizers.</p> <p>Beyond that, however, there was no indication of relief from the grinding war. Russia this week has reiterated its plans to seize territories beyond eastern Ukraine, where the Russian military has spent months trying to conquer the Donbas region.</p> <p>The Ukrainian president's office said that in Kramatorsk, in Donetsk province, Russian shelling destroyed a school and damaged 85 residential buildings.</p> <p>Ukraine's state emergencies agency said it has completed work at the school, which was hit on Thursday, and found three bodies.</p> <p>"Russian strikes on schools and hospitals are very painful and reflect its true goal of reducing peaceful cities to ruins," Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said in televised remarks, repeating his call on residents to evacuate.</p> <p>Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Lt. Gen. Igor Konashenkov, however, said that the Russian strike had killed over 300 Ukrainian troops who used the building of School No. 23 in Kramatorsk as their base. He said another strike destroyed a munitions depot in the industrial zone of the southern city of Mykolaiv.</p> <p>Konashenkov also said that Russian forces destroyed four HIMARS multiple rocket launchers supplied by the U.S. between July 5 and 20. The U.S. said it has supplied 12 HIMARS systems and will deliver four more. The claims could not be independently verified.</p> <p>The Ukrainian military has used HIMARS, which have a higher range and better precision compared with similar Soviet-era systems in the Russian and Ukrainian inventory, to strike Russian munitions depots and other key targets.</p>

	<p>In the Dnipro region of central Ukraine, three schools were destroyed in the latest Russian strikes, Ukrainian authorities said. Seven Russian missiles hit the small town of Apostolove in the Dnipro region, wounding 18 residents.</p> <p>Regional governor Valentyn Reznichenko decried the “senseless” attack, saying that “there are no military goals behind it and this shelling could only be explained by their desire to keep people on edge and sow panic and fear.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/22 Fertilizer cargo from Russia heads to US
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/fertilizer-cargo-russia-heads-us-many-worry-about-food-shortages-2022-07-22/
GIST	<p>HOUSTON/WASHINGTON, July 22 (Reuters) - A tanker carrying a liquid fertilizer product from Russia is about to arrive in the United States, sources and vessel tracking data showed in recent days, at a time of widespread worry that sky-high global fertilizer prices could lead to food shortages.</p> <p>President Joe Biden's administration has not blacklisted Russian agricultural commodities, including fertilizers, in the aftermath of the Ukraine invasion. Still, many Western banks and traders have steered clear of Russian supplies for fear of running afoul of rapidly changing rules.</p> <p>Russia and Ukraine are major exporters of fertilizer, key to keeping corn, soy, rice and wheat yields high. Farmers have scaled back fertilizer use due to high prices, and cut the amount of land they plan to cultivate.</p> <p>Washington sanctioned Russian crude, refined products, coal and liquefied natural gas, and imposed an April 22 deadline to wind down imports.</p> <p>The Liberia-flagged tanker Johnny Ranger was scheduled to arrive in New Orleans on Monday carrying about 39,000 tonnes of urea ammonium nitrate solution, a fertilizer produced by combining urea, nitric acid and ammonia, the sources and Refinitiv Eikon data showed.</p> <p>The vessel loaded last month at St. Petersburg, according to Eikon data.</p> <p>Details on the seller and buyer were not immediately available. The U.S. Treasury Department and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency declined to comment.</p> <p>A State Department spokesperson said the United States has never sanctioned food or agricultural goods from Russia. "Unlike the Russian government, we have no interest in weaponizing food to create humanitarian crises at the expense of vulnerable populations."</p> <p>U.S. non-food sanctions will remain in place until Russian President Vladimir Putin stops the war in Ukraine, the person added.</p> <p>In 2021, the United States imported \$262.6 million worth of urea ammonium nitrate fertilizers from Russia, according to the Commerce Department.</p> <p>This week, the U.S. International Trade Commission revoked hefty anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties on urea ammonium nitrate fertilizers from Russia in an effort to ease fertilizer shortages and price increases.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Homes deemed unaffordable most counties
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/07/21/report-homes-deemed-unaffordable-most-us-counties/

GIST	<p>The combination of rapidly rising mortgage rates and double-digit increases in home prices led to an easily predictable consequence during the second quarter of 2022: The median home is less affordable to median wage earners in 97 percent of counties in the U.S. compared to historic averages.</p> <p>That compares to 69 percent of counties that were historically less affordable in the second quarter of 2021, according to the latest Home Affordability Report from ATTOM, a real estate data firm, and is the highest point since 2007, just before the collapse of the housing market and the Great Recession.</p> <p>ATTOM analyzes average wages and the mortgage, property taxes and insurance required for a median-priced single-family home in each county to determine affordability. The analysts assume buyers would make a 20 percent down payment and would spend a maximum of 28 percent of their gross monthly income on their housing payment.</p> <p>However, the typical down payment for first-time buyers is between 6 and 7 percent, according to the National Association of Realtors. For repeat buyers, the typical down payment is 17 percent. A lower down payment would require buyers to borrow more money, which would make their monthly housing payments even higher and therefore less affordable.</p> <p>Compared to historical levels, median home prices in 560 of the 575 counties analyzed in the second quarter of 2022 are less affordable than in the past to the average wage earners in those counties. In other words, buying a house would consume a higher percentage of the average paycheck than in the past.</p> <p>In addition to comparing housing costs to historic averages, ATTOM's researchers found that the median home is unaffordable to average wage earners in 67 percent of counties. The largest counties by population where homes are unaffordable, meaning costs would require more than 28 percent of the average buyer's gross monthly income, include Los Angeles, Maricopa (Phoenix), San Diego, Orange (outside Los Angeles) and Kings County (Brooklyn).</p> <p>The largest among the 187 counties where median-priced homes remain affordable for the average local worker include Cook (Chicago), Harris (Houston), Philadelphia, Franklin (Columbus, Ohio) and Hennepin (Minneapolis).</p> <p>Annual wages of more than \$75,000 are required to pay for the median-priced home in 40 percent of the markets in ATTOM's report. As is often the case, the 20 counties that require the highest annual wages are in coastal areas, primarily in California. The top two counties with the highest income needed to buy a house are New York (Manhattan), where an annual income of \$362,691 is required to buy the typical house; and San Mateo outside San Francisco, where an annual income of \$357,567 is required. In the District of Columbia, an annual income of \$112,099 is required to buy a median-priced house.</p> <p>The counties with the lowest required wages to afford a median-priced house include Schuylkill (outside Allentown, Pa.), where you need \$17,595 to buy; Cambria (outside Pittsburgh), which requires an annual income of \$20,171; Mercer (outside Pittsburgh), which requires an income of \$23,255; Fayette County (outside Pittsburgh), which requires an income of \$23,638; and Bibb (Macon, Ga.), which requires an income of \$24,501.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Elections top security issue: death threats
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/2022-midterms-election-security-election-worker-threats/
GIST	<p>IN THE LEAD-UP to the 2018 midterm elections in the United States, law enforcement, intelligence, and election officials were on high alert for digital attacks and influence operations after Russia demonstrated the reality of these threats by targeting the presidential elections in 2016. Six years later, the threat of hacking and malign foreign influence remain, but 2022 is a different time and a new top-line risk has emerged: physical safety threats to election officials, their families, and their workplaces.</p>

In July 2021 the Department of Justice [launched](#) a task force to counter threats against election workers, and the US Election Assistance Commission released [security guidance](#) for election professionals. But in public comments this week, lawmakers, top national security officials, and election administrators themselves all expressed concern that misinformation about the security and validity of US voting continues to shape a new threat landscape going into the midterms.

“In New Mexico, the conspiracies about our voting and election systems have gripped a certain portion of the electorate and have caused people to act,” New Mexico’s Secretary of State and top election official Maggie Toulouse Oliver testified before the House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee yesterday. “During the 2020 election cycle, I was doxxed and had to leave my home for weeks under state police protection. Since 2020, my office has certainly seen an uptick in social media trolling, aggrieved emails, and calls into our office, and other communications that parrot the misinformation circulating widely in the national discourse. But more recently, especially since our June 2022 primary election, my office has experienced pointed threats serious enough to be referred to law enforcement.”

In a discussion on Tuesday about midterm election security at the Fordham International Conference on Cyber Security in New York City, FBI director Christopher Wray and NSA director Paul Nakasone emphasized that federal intelligence and law enforcement view foreign adversaries that have been active during past US elections—including Russia, China, and Iran—as potential threats heading into the 2022 midterms. But threats against election workers now appear at the top of their list.

“We are ... positioning ourselves to understand our adversaries better, so we do have a series of operations that we’re conducting now and in the future as we approach the fall,” Nakasone said on Tuesday. “But I think the other piece of it is, this isn’t episodic, this for us is a persistent engagement that we have across time, in terms of being able to understand where our adversaries are at, what they’re trying to do, where we need to impact them, understanding how they’re getting better.”

When asked how the FBI handles misinformation that stems from foreign influence operations but ultimately embeds itself in the domestic psyche, Wray said that the Bureau simply has a set of enforcement mandates around elections that it focuses on carrying out.

“We’re not the truth police,” he told the conference. “It’s not to say there isn’t an important role for calling out falsity versus truth, it’s just that our contributions are fairly specific. We’re targeting foreign malign influence. We are investigating malicious cyber actors, whether they are foreign or otherwise, that target election infrastructure—so cyber activity. We are investigating federal election crimes, and that covers everything from campaign finance violations, to voter fraud and voter suppression, to something that we’ve seen an alarming amount of over the last little bit—threats of violence against election workers, which we’re not going to tolerate.”

Wray added that threats against election officials are currently a priority for the FBI. “These are people who are engaging in tireless and really, frankly, selfless work to ensure free and fair elections for all of us, and the idea that they would become the target of threats of violence is totally unacceptable,” Wray said.

In a US Election Assistance Commission [discussion](#) on election official security last week, Sheriff Peter Koutoujian of the Middlesex Sheriff’s Office in Massachusetts noted that state and local law enforcement are also dealing with questions of how best to protect election officials.

“We all witnessed the rhetoric and the threats leveled towards officials ... during the 2020 election,” he said. “You can see them still being leveled against election officials this past spring during local elections as well as in reference to upcoming state and federal elections this fall. In law enforcement, we need to make sure that we’re following up on threats of violence as appropriate and protecting these individuals and thus protecting our democracy.”

The shift in the threat landscape is significant. Election officials and security researchers have focused over the past two decades on [raising awareness](#) about the need for [better coordination](#) and stronger digital security protections across the diverse patchwork of local election systems that is a hallmark of US voting.

	<p>But with that work still in progress and in need of funding, threats to election officials could undercut hard-won progress.</p> <p>“While we are now on the right track to secure our election infrastructure against cyberattacks, new and different threats, many with domestic roots, have arisen, including threats of physical harm to our election officials, their families, and their staff,” Elizabeth Howard, senior counsel at New York University’s Brennan Center for Justice, told the House Homeland Security Committee during yesterday’s hearing. “Not surprisingly, these threats are leading to additional serious concerns, such as an alarming number of election officials leaving the profession, which are contributing to the fragility of our democracy.”</p> <p>In her testimony, Howard urged Congress to allocate more funds for protecting election officials and to direct federal agencies to focus on the issue and combat misinformation about election integrity in any way possible.</p> <p>John Katko, a Republican from New York and ranking member of the House Homeland Security Committee, summed up the challenge bluntly: “A lot of the problems with election security are generated, it seems like to me, from the internet and the ability of cowards to hide behind the internet and foment discontent online, and then make that discontent actionable by nutjobs locally.”</p> <p>With the November midterms less than four months away, the need to protect election officials grows more urgent by the day, not only for workers and their families but also for US stability more broadly. As Koutoujian put it, “If we’re not protective and careful of what we do now—I believe we’re more fragile than we think we are.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Seattle faces another CHOP lawsuit
SOURCE	https://www.capitolhillseattle.com/2022/07/seattle-faces-another-chop-lawsuit-as-family-claims-city-failed-to-protect-teen-gunned-down-at-camp/
GIST	<p>Fresh off its financial settlement with the City of Seattle over a teen shot and killed on the edge of the CHOP camp, a legal firm has announced it will file another claim on behalf of the family of Antonio Mays, Jr., the 16-year-old who died in a bullet-riddled jeep as armed security at the camp opened fire on 12th Ave amid the tents and barricades of the protest zone.</p> <p>Oshan and Associates announced the claim this week generating a flurry of media coverage. “Evan Oshan, of Oshan and Associates, said Tuesday that city of Seattle and King County leaders, even Washington state’s governor, failed to protect Alexander Mays’ son,” one TV station reported.</p> <p>The new legal threat follows last month’s \$500,000 settlement between Oshan and the Seattle City Attorney of a wrongful death lawsuit in the June 2020 shooting of 19-year-old Lorenzo Anderson on the edge of CHOP.</p> <p>The legal process for the 19-year-old’s alleged murderer continues. Prosecutors say 18-year-old Marcel Long shot and killed the teen at 10th and Pine in a June 2020 fracas after what witnesses said was a night of gambling and fireworks. Long, 18 at the time of the shooting, was arrested a year later in Des Moines, Washington by a U.S. Marshals led task force and is currently awaiting trial.</p> <p>There have been no arrests in the Mays killing.</p> <p>The 16-year-old was shot and killed and a 14-year-old boy riding with him in the vehicle suffered critical injuries on a night of driveby fears and uncertainty including the stolen jeep speeding across Cal Anderson and through the protest camp before the confrontation on 12th Ave that ended in bloodshed.</p> <p>911 callers reported a person shooting into a vehicle on 12th Ave just after 3 AM that morning.</p>

The crashed jeep, a bullet hole in its windshield and badly damaged, was reportedly rifled through by people at the camp where it stood on 12th Ave near E Pine but **Seattle Police** eventually entered the scene to collect evidence in the hours following the shooting outside the abandoned **East Precinct**.

48 hours later, **Mayor Jenny Durkan** [issued her executive order](#) authorizing SPD to raid and sweep the occupied protest and camp from Cal Anderson and the East Precinct.

In the days following the late June 2020 shooting, CHS reported on [the identification of the 16-year-old victim Mays, Jr.](#) but was able to provide few details from friends or family about his life or what brought him to the protest camp.

According to friends from who knew him through online sites and who were familiar with the CHOP camp, Mays — who went by Rico — was a runaway from Southern California who came to Seattle to meet up with a friend. He also had family in the Seattle area. “My baby cousin was shot and killed yesterday in the CHOP zone,” a family member [wrote](#). “He was 16 years old trying to become involved in his community and a movement for true civil rights like his grandparents before him.”

The claim over the young man’s death blames Durkan and city officials for failing to provide emergency services to the CHOP camp and during the 2020 Black Lives Matter demonstrations. Like the Anderson lawsuit, it does not include a specific financial claim.

It will join other legal fights still continuing over the city’s response to the 2020 protests. [A federal case](#) brought by Lorenzo Anderson’s mother was dismissed late last year but is being appealed. City Hall also faces ongoing litigation in [the federal lawsuit brought over its response to CHOP](#) by a collection of Capitol Hill real estate developers, property owners, and businesses. And a of [a sprawling personal injury, wrongful death, and civil rights lawsuit](#) brought by protesters against the city and state also remains in motion.

UPDATE 7/21/2022: The filings provided to CHS by Oshan & Associates are also focused on Raz Simone, a fixture at the camp whose role has been described as everything from warlord by some media accounts to protest charlatan by those who were there.

In a brief conversation with CHS, lawyer Evan Oshan said he is including Simone in the lawsuit because he served as a de facto chief of police at the camp.

“Not only did authorities fail to exercise control over the CHOP/CHAZ zone or prevent Raz Simone from handing out weapons to his make-shift police force, they collaborated with him,” the claim notice sent to the City of Seattle and media reads, citing [reporting done by the activist site](#) The Post Millennial months after the protests.

Oshan said Thursday his firm’s case is facing a major roadblock in acquiring more information from Seattle Police about the Mays, Jr. killing. The city’s response to its request for police records related to the investigation notified the firm that SPD cannot release the information at this time because the investigation remains “active and open.”

The lawyer is asking for community help in documenting what happened that night and the circumstances surrounding the shooting.

People at the camp or with information can call 833 44-TOXIC, Oshan says, “because everything about this is toxic.”

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HEADLINE	07/21 EU: 7 th wave of Russia economic sanctions
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/21/eu-russia-sanctions-nightwolves-putin-actors-gold

<p>GIST</p>	<p>New EU sanctions hitting Russian gold, a major bank, a nationalist motorcycle club known as the Nightwolves and actors backing Vladimir Putin have been dismissed as insufficient by Volodymyr Zelenskiy.</p> <p>Approval of the EU's seventh wave of economic sanctions by the 27 member states on Thursday morning has been lauded by the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, as a "strong signal".</p> <p>The "reinforced, prolonged EU sanctions against the Kremlin" send "a strong signal to Moscow: we will keep the pressure high for as long as it takes", Von der Leyen tweeted.</p> <p>In Kyiv, however, Ukraine's president was withering about the incremental moves by the EU, where the central concern for politicians and officials in recent days has been the Russian threat to gas supply this winter.</p> <p>"This is not enough and I am telling my partners this frankly," Zelenskiy said in a late-night address in response to the latest round. "Russia must feel a much higher price for the war to force it to seek peace."</p> <p>The latest measures agreed in Brussels have been nicknamed the "six and a half package" owing to their limited ambition. On Monday, Josep Borrell, the EU's foreign policy chief, admitted that leaders had been increasingly concerned that the bloc's sanctions were self-harming.</p> <p>"There is a big debate about are the sanctions effective, are the sanctions affecting us more than Russia," he said. "Some European leaders have been saying that the sanctions were an error, was a mistake; well, I don't think it was a mistake."</p> <p>Those concerns were reflected in the relatively modest set of measures, including a ban on Russian gold imports, that were agreed by written procedure on Thursday morning.</p> <p>The G7, the world's seven biggest economies, including the UK, France, Germany, and Italy, have already prohibited the imports of Russian gold but that will now be enforced across the EU.</p> <p>Forty-eight individuals and nine entities have also been targeted. According to a draft paper circulated before formal approval, they include Russia's biggest lender, SberBank, and the actors Vladimir Mashkov, who had appeared in the 2001 film Behind Enemy Lines and 2011 film Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol, and Sergey Bezrukov.</p> <p>Mashkov had also "performed during the propaganda rally in support for the illegal annexation of Crimea and the war against Ukraine, which took place on 18 March 2022 at Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow", according to the leaked text.</p> <p>Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST</p> <p>Also on the list is Andrey Bobrowskyi, who is described as "a member of the nationalist motorcycle club Nightwolves MC and leader of the Roads for Victory branch of Nightwolves MC".</p> <p>The EU claims that Bobrowskyi "organised several Nightwolves rallies in Berlin, Poland and Russia" in support of Putin's war in Ukraine.</p> <p>The full details of the sanction measures will be published this week in the EU's official journal. In addition to the restrictive measures, the EU also decided to grant €500m (£420m) in military aid to Ukraine.</p>
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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>07/22 Day 149 of the Russia invasion</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/22/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-149-of-the-invasion</p>

GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A deal to resume Ukraine's Black Sea grain exports is expected to be signed by Ukraine, Russia, Turkey and the United Nations on Friday. The agreement will be put in writing by the parties and signed at the Dolmabahce Palace offices at 1.30pm GMT, the office of the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, said. Ukraine's foreign ministry spokesperson, Oleg Nikolenko, added: "In summary, a document may be signed which will bind the sides to [ensure] safe functioning of export routes in the Black Sea." • The United States said it would hold Russia accountable for implementing the deal. A state department spokesperson, Ned Price, accused Russia of weaponising food, saying: "What will really matter is the implementation of this agreement. We will, of course, continue to work with our partners to hold Russia accountable for its implementation." • Russia is "about to run out of steam" and take an operational pause, offering Ukraine the chance to strike back, the head of UK intelligence said. "I think our assessment is that the Russians will increasingly find it difficult to supply manpower material over the next few weeks," said Richard Moore, the MI6 chief. "They will have to pause in some way, and that will give the Ukrainians opportunities to strike back." Moore also said half of all the Russian spies operating under diplomatic cover around Europe, totalling about 400, had been expelled since the start of the war in Ukraine. • Germany's economics minister announced a new wave of emergency measures to cut the country's consumption of gas after flows from Russia through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline resumed at reduced levels following a scheduled shutdown. • An EU proposal that member countries cut gas use by 15% to prepare for possible supply cuts from Russia is facing resistance from governments, throwing into doubt whether they will approve the emergency plan. • Britain will send scores of artillery guns and more than 1,600 anti-tank weapons to Ukraine, the UK defence secretary, Ben Wallace, said on Thursday. He said Britain would also provide counter-battery radar systems, hundreds of drones and more than 50,000 rounds of ammunition. • Ukraine has called for an international tribunal to bring Vladimir Putin to justice more quickly. Trying Russia separately for the act of aggression, with international participation, would speed up its quest to hold the Russian president and his inner circle accountable, officials said. "We hope to have the indictment within three months," Andriy Smyrnov, Ukraine's deputy head of the presidential administration, said. • The Belarus president, Alexander Lukashenko, said the war must be stopped in order to avoid the "abyss of nuclear war" and insisted Ukraine accept Russia's demands. "There's no need to go further. Further lies the abyss of nuclear war," he told AFP. Lukashenko also accused the west of seeking a conflict with Russia and of provoking the war. "If Russia had not got ahead of you, members of Nato, you would have organised and struck a blow against it," he said. • Russian proxies in the Russian-occupied territory of Donbas have been confiscating documents from forcibly mobilised troops, according to Ukrainian military chiefs. Russian proxies have reportedly been stripping personal documents from residents in attempts to force them to fight against Ukraine and making it impossible for forcibly mobilised troops to desert or identify those who have been killed, the general staff of Ukraine's armed forces said. • The UK National Crime Agency has called for more funding to tackle Russian kleptocracy. The NCA said the UK had been slower to seize sanctioned Russian oligarchs' assets than the US because it could not rely on the same "substantial level of investment" that Washington had poured into tackling international corruption and sanctions-busting. • What could be a priceless Fabergé egg has been found onboard a Russian oligarch's superyacht seized by US authorities. US deputy attorney general Lisa Monaco told the Aspen security forum on Wednesday it was one of the more "interesting" finds her team had made.
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HEADLINE	07/21 Ukraine seeks international tribunal
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/21/ukraine-calls-for-international-tribunal-to-bring-putin-to-justice-more-quickly
GIST	Ukraine has said it wants to establish a one-off international tribunal to try Russia's top regime members for the act of aggression, which could see it issuing an arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin .

Andriy Smyrnov, Ukraine's deputy head of the presidential administration, said on Thursday that [Ukraine](#) believed trying Russia separately for the act of aggression, with international participation, would speed up its quest to hold the Russian president and his inner circle accountable.

The act of aggression – accepted by UN members as an international crime – cannot be tried by the international criminal court due to lack of jurisdiction, but is considered the gravest international crime because of its subsequent consequences. On Thursday, three people were killed and 23 injured by two Russian attacks in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, according to the Kharkiv regional prosecutor's office.

Smyrnov said the act of aggression, for which Ukraine would initiate additional proceedings, was easy to prove, whereas the type of cases that the ICC could try in relation to Ukraine – war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity – would take years.

“The fact that [Russia] invaded Ukraine with their army is a fact accepted by our international partners,” said Smyrnov. “We hope to have the indictment within three months.”

Smyrnov said a judgment made by an international tribunal would still go some way towards justice for Ukraine even without the accused in custody.

“Already to have an indictment and to have an arrest warrant for Putin, for [Russia's defence minister Sergei] Shoigu ... will be a big step forward in getting justice,” said Anton Korynevych, ambassador-at-large for Ukraine, who is leading talks with international partners on the matter. “They will be claimed and labelled as potential criminals by an international and legitimate tribunal.”

“Then, whenever they [travel] to a state which recognises the tribunal, problems for them might arise,” said Korynevych.

“Of course, we would be more than happy to see Shoigu in custody, and not only him but all the other guys who made the decision back then, not only in 2022, but in 2014 also,” said Korynevych, who added that in their view, sentencing at the ad hoc tribunal would follow ICC norms.

Korynevych, who named The Hague as the potential host city for the tribunal, said he wanted as many international partners to participate as possible in order to legitimise any decision and widen the potential for accountability. “The idea is for it to be open and as international as possible,” he said.

Korynevych said several of Ukraine's international partners had agreed to establish the tribunal. He said, however, that it was too early and too sensitive to name the countries that had agreed.

“Yes, Ukrainians will be involved, it will be necessary to have a Ukrainian prosecutor, but we hope the judges will be international,” said Korynevych.

Anya Neistat, legal director of the Docket initiative at the Clooney Foundation for Justice, speaking to the Guardian in May, stressed the importance of Ukraine following procedures meticulously so as to avoid the perception of victor's justice.

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This week, Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, dismissed Ukraine's prosecutor general, Iryna Venediktova. In Zelenskyy's nightly address to the nation, he said Venediktova and the head of Ukraine's intelligence service, Ivan Bakanov, had collaborators in their departments.

A source in the presidential administration claimed Venediktova's actions had damaged Ukraine's reputation and stymied efforts to release Ukrainian prisoners of war after a Russian soldier was sentenced to life imprisonment after a six-day war crimes trial in May.

	<p>“Our colleagues in Germany wrote to me asking: ‘Is it possible for a court to listen to all the evidence and to question all the witnesses and reach a judgment in five days?’” said the source, claiming the trial had also seriously hampered efforts to exchange Ukrainian prisoners of war with Russia .</p> <p>Kremlin representatives had subsequently threatened to try all “2,500 Ukrainian prisoners of war who came out of Azovstal, in our own tribunal, before returning the question of a prisoner exchange in three year’s time”, the source claimed.</p> <p>In an interview with CNN, Venediktova said she would not criticise Zelenskiy’s decision, but believed she was dismissed because of realpolitik and because “it may be time to have a prosecutor with other views”.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/22 Japan: BA.5 subvariant drives record surge
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/22/japan-urges-highest-level-of-vigilance-as-omicron-subvariant-drives-record-covid-surge
GIST	<p>Japan’s government has urged people to exercise the “highest level of vigilance” after the country reported a record number of new Covid-19 cases in a new wave of infections driven by the highly transmissible BA.5 subvariant.</p> <p>More than 186,000 cases were recorded nationwide on Thursday, while Tokyo easily beat its existing daily record with 31,878 cases. The capital, along with Osaka and Fukuoka, were among 30 of the country’s 47 prefectures to report record highs this week.</p> <p>People living in the southern prefecture of Okinawa, which saw a record 5,250 new cases, would be asked to avoid non-essential outings from Friday until mid-August, the public broadcaster NHK said.</p> <p>In addition, groups of up to four diners would be permitted to eat at restaurants for a maximum of only two hours, while older people and those with underlying health conditions would be advised to meet only family members with whom they lived, NHK said.</p> <p>Okinawa has a hospital bed occupancy rate of about 60%, prompting the local medical association to warn that the islands’ health infrastructure was on the verge of collapse and to ask people not to make emergency visits if they have light, cold-like symptoms.</p> <p>The central government said there were no immediate plans to return to restrictions seen during previous waves of the virus, but urged people to exercise caution amid fears that further surges could raise pressure on health services.</p> <p>The health minister, Shigeyuki Goto, said the sharp rise in infections “could increase the number of patients with severe symptoms”, adding that he was particularly concerned about possible outbreaks among vulnerable people in hospitals and nursing homes.</p> <p>The chief cabinet secretary, Hirokazu Matsuno, said: “We need to keep a close eye on the infection situation going forward, including access to medical services, with the highest level of vigilance.”</p> <p>The Kyodo news agency reported that some members of the official Covid advisory panel had called on the government to consider placing areas with the highest infection rates under a state of emergency – a move that could include restricting people’s movements and requiring bars and restaurants to close early and limit alcohol sales, or face fines.</p> <p>That appears unlikely given that the current wave – Japan’s seventh of the pandemic – has disproportionately affected children and young people. The virus panel warned, however, that a recent rise in cases among people aged 60 could see more patients developing serious symptoms.</p>

Return to Top	<p>Experts say that widespread mask-wearing, a high vaccination rate and other factors have helped Japan avoid the catastrophic death tolls seen in comparable countries, and without the use of lockdowns.</p> <p>Despite its large population of over-65s, Japan has the lowest per capita rate of Covid-19 deaths among the 38 OECD countries, with 246 per million people, according to Our World in Data.</p> <p>Mask-wearing is still the norm, even after the government said people could remove them outdoors while socially distanced, especially during the hot summer months.</p> <p>Some Tokyoites said they were worried about the recent surge.</p> <p>“I think it’s really shocking that it’s risen to more than 30,000,” said Ai Okamura, an office worker. “I live with my grandmother, so it makes me feel much more cautious.”</p> <p>Shinichi Koyama, a systems engineer, said he wasn’t surprised infections had risen to record levels. “Since around spring, everyone has calmed down and gone back to normal,” he said. “So to a certain extent this was predictable.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Patriot Prayer Gibson acquittal: free speech
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3572221/dori-patriot-prayer-founder-gibson-acquittal-free-speech-victory-sue-da/
GIST	<p>He may have been “obnoxious,” a Portland-area judge said of conservative Patriot Prayer founder Joey Gibson, but he did not cause a riot involving Antifa and other left-wing demonstrators in May 2019.</p> <p>Tuesday’s ruling from Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge Benjamin Souede frees Gibson from the threat of a felony federal riot charge conviction and a five-year prison sentence.</p> <p>The acquittal, Gibson told Thursday’s Dori Monson Show, is a win for free speech and non-violent demonstrations and counter-protests.</p> <p>“The record is overwhelming and indisputable that Mr. Gibson spoke obnoxiously to the crowd at Cider Riot,” the judge determined. “He was provocative, he was taunting ... That is all speech ... Speech cannot be considered in whether or not defendant committed a crime of riot.”</p> <p>“When the judge made that decision, he didn’t necessarily like me, but it was important for him to uphold the law,” Gibson told Dori about Souede’s ruling.</p> <p>Instead, Souede ruled, there was no evidence that Gibson’s involvement showed a level of violence that justified felony riot charges.</p> <p>“I am somewhat bewildered that the state has driven the case to this point,” Souede said. “As an institution, the district attorney’s office’s decision to push this case to trial is surprising, given the state of the evidence.”</p> <p>The case involved the response from Vancouver, Wash.-based Patriot Prayer followers, a group Gibson founded in 2016 to counter violent protests in Portland and other cities on the West Coast. The May Day 2019 brawl, Gibson said, occurred during a post-protest gathering of left-wing demonstrators, including alleged Antifa and anti-fascist groups, outside the Cider Riot bar. Conservative counter-protestors – including Gibson – arrived at the bar’s parking lot to face those they considered responsible for vandalism in Portland earlier that day.</p> <p>In defense of his response, Gibson told Dori’s listeners, “I can’t control other people, but what I always do is document. I’ll try to talk to people. Sometimes it can come across as antagonistic. I’m never physical, so they (left-wing demonstrators) have meltdowns. The demons really come out, for some reason, when they see me.”</p>

	<p>Video evidence presented in court backed Gibson up.</p> <p>On the day of the brawl, Gibson said, he was met by those “throwing stuff and pepper-spraying me – but all I did was stay there and never responded in violence.”</p> <p>Despite the clash, none of the leftist protestors were cited for the fighting, Gibson said.</p> <p>Gibson, 39, told Dori’s listeners that the three years since he was charged in connection with the fight were “hard for me and for my family and my kids – not knowing if (their) dad was going to be locked up.”</p> <p>And now, The Dori Monson Show asked Gibson in their Thursday interview, is Gibson going to sue the District Attorney for wrongful prosecution?</p> <p>“One hundred percent,” Gibson said. “We’re really looking forward to it.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Russia, Syria illegal ‘double tap’ airstrikes
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/21/syria-russia-double-tap-airstrikes-report-war-crimes/
GIST	<p>The Russia and Syrian governments have carried out dozens of “double tap” airstrikes on civilians and humanitarian workers in Syria since 2013, according to findings by a Syria-focused rights group, pointing to a pattern of illegal attacks that appears to have continued into Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The report, published Thursday by the Syria Justice and Accountability Center (SJAC), a U.S.-based human rights group, identifies 58 double-tap attacks targeting residential areas outside government-held territory between 2013 and 2021. In such attacks, Russia and Syria shell or launch an airstrike targeting a spot where paramedics and civilians are gathered to help the victims of an initial strike.</p> <p>Syrian and Russian forces conducted the strikes “as part of a larger strategy to punish and regain control of opposition-held areas” during Syria’s more than decade-long civil war, the report alleges.</p> <p>“Double-tap airstrikes represent the ‘shock and awe’ policy of the Syrian government meant to ruthlessly suppress opposition sentiment and terrorize civilians,” Mohammad Al Abdallah, the SJAC’s executive director, said in a news release. The attacks amount to war crimes, he said.</p> <p>Researchers used open-source intelligence, including videos and satellite imagery, to verify each strike. Many of the documented double taps occurred in Idlib, a rebel-held province in northwestern Syria, and Rif Damashq, a region encompassing the capital, Damascus, that saw fierce fighting for years.</p> <p>The attacks represent a “pattern of the Syrian government violating international humanitarian law,” said Nessma Bashi, the report’s lead author. In addition to deliberate attacks on civilians, international law prohibits attacks on medical personnel, hospitals and humanitarian workers — as well as violence that aims to “spread terror among the civilian population.”</p> <p>The report reconstructs five incidents that highlight the civilian toll of double-tap strikes.</p> <p>In 2013, civilians working to rescue survivors and unearth bodies from a destroyed housing complex in a suburb of Damascus were hit by another strike. “The civilians rescuing survivors had no time to run,” the report says. “A headless body was carried out from a bombed-out structure.”</p> <p>Syrian and Russian aircraft repeatedly targeted Syria Civil Defense workers, also known as the White Helmets, in double-tap attacks in the Damascus suburb of Douma in March 2018, the report alleges. The volunteer group, which operates in opposition-held areas, became famous for providing emergency medical care after attacks, digging through rubble to rescue people.</p>

In some cases cited in the report, Bashi said, double-tap attacks killed White Helmets responders as their cameras rolled, capturing evidence of the second strike.

Ismail Alabdullah, an Idlib-based media coordinator for the White Helmets, said he witnessed “tens of double strikes” in Aleppo. Two of his colleagues were killed by a double-tap strike as they responded to an attack in central Aleppo during the brutal siege of that city in 2016, he said.

“I was lucky — I’m still alive now,” he told The Washington Post.

Watchdog [groups](#) and [journalists](#) have documented double-tap strikes allegedly carried out by Syrian and Russian forces, including one that partly destroyed a hospital supported by Doctors Without Borders in Homs in 2015. U.N. investigators [accused Russia](#) in 2020 of carrying out a double-tap attack on a market in Syria in July 2019 that killed at least 43 civilians. But the SJAC says its report provides “the most comprehensive study of double tap incidents” in the conflict to date.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s forces began carrying out double-tap strikes in the early years of the war, according to the report. The attacks intensified after Russia entered the conflict officially in 2015. Laser-guided weapons, such as the Russian-made [Krasnopol](#), wreaked more-widespread destruction.

Russia has deployed this tactic, honed in Syria, in its war in Ukraine, according to reports from [international investigators](#) and [journalists](#) on the ground. In a March attack in Kharkiv, a Russian missile allegedly hit a regional administration building. A second strike occurred a few minutes later, after rescuers had arrived, according to an April report by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Five civilians were killed in another double-tap strike in Kharkiv the following month, as a Red Cross team tried to administer first aid, [the Australian Broadcast Corporation reported](#).

“Syria was kind of the testing ground for this approach,” Bashi said. “What Ukraine has shown is that double taps are being conducted on a regular basis.”

It’s one of several examples of Moscow [pulling from its Syria playbook](#) in Ukraine. In April, Russia tapped Gen. Alexander Dvornikov, a veteran of Moscow’s military operations in Syria, to oversee its operations in Ukraine.

The report’s authors hope their findings will aid efforts to hold Syria and Russia accountable. The SJAC, which collects and analyzes documentation of violations committed by all parties in the Syria conflict, plans to release additional reports in coming months on rights abuses allegedly carried out by other actors in the war, Bashi said.

Accountability has so far proved largely elusive. Syria is not party to the Rome Statute, the governing treaty of the International Criminal Court, which means the court has limited jurisdiction in Syria. Russia, which withdrew from the ICC treaty in 2016, has obstructed efforts by the U.N. Security Council to refer the Syria conflict to the court.

Still, human rights lawyers have [launched a fresh effort](#) to bring war crimes cases involving Syrian officials to the ICC. National courts in Europe, meanwhile, are being used to pursue such cases against Assad’s government, through the principle of [universal jurisdiction](#).

Syrians seeking justice see the war in Ukraine as a double-edged sword, Bashi said. “A lot of Syrians were concerned that the media attention and the money was going to be flooded to Ukraine and everyone else was going to be neglected because of this,” she said.

But Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has also [breathed new life](#) into the field of international law and efforts to investigate and prosecute war crimes.

	<p>“I would hope this would pull more attention to the importance of accountability efforts across the board,” Bashi said. “Certainly we know there are specific members of the Russian military who were involved in Syria and are now key players in Ukraine. If it is the case that those people are held accountable for crimes they commit in Ukraine, we will consider that a win for Syrians.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Russia moves in Africa problematic for US
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/07/21/russia-africa-wagner-group/
GIST	<p>U.S. senators evaluating President Biden’s nominees for two influential military assignments said Thursday that Russia’s spreading influence in volatile parts of Africa is jeopardizing American interests and implored both to prioritize the burgeoning policy dilemma, if they are confirmed.</p> <p>Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee appealed to Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Michael E. Langley, Biden’s nominee to lead U.S. Africa Command, to detail how he would endeavor to counter Russia’s activities on the continent. He affirmed that they were problematic and would become a priority pending the full Senate’s approval of his promotion.</p> <p>Langley appeared before the committee alongside Army Lt. Gen. Bryan Fenton, Biden’s pick to lead U.S. Special Operations Command.</p> <p>Lawmakers expressed acute concern about Moscow’s use of the mercenary outfit Wagner Group to raise Russia’s profile on the continent, highlighting the group’s activities in Mali, where back-to-back military coups have destabilized the region and, they argued, given Russia a foothold in West Africa.</p> <p>They also worried that Russia’s expanding influence across the continent could elbow the United States out of Africa’s rich commodities-mining sector, focusing particular attention on rare-earth minerals such as cobalt, a critical component of rechargeable lithium ion batteries, used in cellphones, electric vehicles and many other products.</p> <p>The lawmakers expressed alarm, too, over Russia’s recent success rallying support among African leaders against Western sanctions. Last month, Senegalese President Macky Sall, chairman of the African Union, issued a public appeal following a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, asking Western nations to lift punitive measures targeting food products, particularly grain.</p> <p>The West has accused Russia of setting off a global food crisis by invading Ukraine and blocking its grain exports — some of the most significant in the world — from leaving Ukrainian ports. Moscow has also been accused of stealing Ukrainian grain and selling it globally as if it were Russian-produced.</p> <p>“There’s significant work to be done about telling the right story,” Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) said during Thursday’s hearing.</p> <p>“It pains me to see African leaders accepting disinformation about what’s causing this epidemic of hunger in Africa,” he added, saying it is imperative that U.S. leaders put more effort behind “winning the narrative war.”</p> <p>Kaine and other senators appealed to Langley, who is likely to be confirmed in the coming weeks, to view his next role not only as a military position but also one that involves diplomacy. Langley agreed with that interpretation of the job and with the growing threat Russian expansion in Africa poses to U.S. interests.</p> <p>“The Wagner group, they have ill intentions,” Langley said, noting that the organization has helped to proliferate Russia’s already significant portfolio of arms sales in Africa.</p>

	<p>By partnering with opposition movements, including the military coup leaders in Mali and governments in other parts of Africa, the Wagner Group has helped magnify Russia's footprint there beyond its already considerable arms sales, which make up nearly half of the continent's military equipment imports.</p> <p>"It just brings on fragility, especially across fragile countries," Langley said, promising that, if confirmed, "we will reengage, we will reset" and demonstrate that "we are still the partner of choice."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Kirkland: 151 firearms 'guns for gift cards'
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/kirkland-police-collect-151-firearms-for-18k-in-gift-cards-in-june-and-july
GIST	<p>KIRKLAND, Wash. - More than 150 firearms have been turned in to the City of Kirkland after two "Guns for Gift Cards" events in June and this past Thursday.</p> <p>A spokesperson said between the two events, \$18,350 worth of gift cards were handed out to Kirkland residents.</p> <p>"I was here last month and this month because my mother passed away, unfortunately, and she had a handgun I wanted to get rid of and my brother also had a rifle, which I also found cleaning out her house," said Barry Minnick. "This was the perfect opportunity to get rid of both of them and get some cash."</p> <p>Kirkland Police were in charge of the efforts and collected five AR-15/AK-47 type firearms, dozens of handguns, rifles, shotguns and non-functioning firearms.</p> <p>"We've actually had a lot of people come into the line that aren't even Kirkland residents and aren't even interested in getting the gift card, but say 'I just don't want these anymore, I just want to destroy them responsibly.' We do go through those background checks on those firearms, we do actually fire the firearms to get the ballistic information on it to see if it is a firearm that was tied to a previous crime," said Sergeant Eric Karp of Kirkland PD's Community Services Unit. "So far I don't believe any of them have come back as being stolen."</p> <p>Police said it's difficult to show if programs like this prevent or reduce crime, but said unintentional discharges and firearm suicides are also a factor to consider.</p> <p>The King County Council is poised to pass legislation next Tuesday for a year-round program to turn in unwanted firearms and ammunition.</p> <p>On Tuesday, King County Council members introduced a proposal that would create a year-round, voluntary gun and ammunition return program within the Sheriff's Office.</p> <p>"Three-quarters, 75%, of all firearms deaths in Washington are suicide, folks that are having a tough time in their life," said Council member Rod Dembowski, the prime sponsor of the legislation. "We know that a gun in a household means you're twice as likely to die by firearm deaths than those without guns in their homes."</p> <p>The King County Sheriff's Office will run the program which will serve people living in unincorporated King County and any of the ten contracted cities deputies serve.</p> <p>"We want to reduce all kinds of gun violence that results in death due to suicide and also crime in the community," said Council member Dembowski. "While this will not solve all of that. this is one step that we as a local government can do."</p> <p>If passed, the year-round program will likely take more firm shape by the end of the year.</p> <p>Both King County and the City of Kirkland hope to hold additional buyback events later this year. A spokesperson for Kirkland said the city's next event will be held in September.</p>

"What do you do with them if you're uncomfortable with them or have outgrown them. You know, it's not something you want to just go put in the trash can," said Dalynn Farris of Kirkland. "It's one less thing that someone broke into your house and found. If they would've been doing this as a way to come dispose of them responsibly, I would've brought it for free."

Here is the breakdown of Kirkland Police Department's two events:

June 25: 45 participants, 91 firearms turned in for destruction

- AR-15/AK-47 type firearms: 3
- Handguns: 32
- Rifles/Shotguns: 47
- Obviously non-functioning firearms/pellet guns: 9

\$11,375 worth of gift cards were exchanged for these firearms on June 25.

July 20: 21 participants, 60 firearms turned in for destruction

- AR-15/AK-47 type firearms: 2
- Handguns: 34
- Rifles/Shotguns: 22
- Obviously non-functioning firearms/pellet guns: 2

\$6,975 worth of gift cards were exchanged for these firearms on July 20.

The two events combined netted:

- 91 firearms (1st) + 60 firearms (2nd) = 151 firearms
- \$11,375 (1st) + \$6,975 (2nd) = \$18,350 worth of gift cards handed out

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HEADLINE	07/22 Turkey: Ukraine, Russia grain deal
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/22/world/ukraine-war-russia#turkey-says-a-deal-between-ukraine-and-russia-to-unblock-grain-exports-will-be-signed-on-friday
GIST	<p>The Turkish presidency says that a signing ceremony will be held on Friday to unveil a deal brokered between Ukraine and Russia aiming to allow millions of tons of Ukrainian grain to be exported, alleviating a global food shortage.</p> <p>There was no official confirmation from Moscow or Kyiv that an accord had been reached — only that negotiations would continue on Friday. But officials in both capitals confirmed on Thursday that the two sides were getting closer to an agreement.</p> <p>More than 20 million tons of Ukrainian grain has been trapped in Ukraine's Black Sea ports since Russia's full-scale invasion began in February, cutting off grain exports from one of the world's breadbaskets, exacerbating famine in Africa, and undermining international food supply chains already battered by the pandemic.</p> <p>In a war in which President Vladimir V. Putin has shown a willingness to target civilians and weaponize energy and food, Russia's blockage of Ukraine's grain exports has rippled across the world and has been among the gravest international repercussions of Moscow's attack on its neighbor.</p> <p>Russia's de facto blockade of the Black Sea caused Ukraine's exports to drop to one-sixth of their prewar level. Officials have sought to break the impasse for months, as international aid organizations have made increasingly dire forecasts about an increase in food prices and rising rates of hunger and starvation. At the same time, Western countries have treaded carefully, mindful of the risks of ensnaring NATO in the war.</p> <p>Andrei Rudenko, Russia's deputy foreign minister, told Interfax on Thursday that the negotiations are proceeding "quite dynamically, and the parties are participating in them constructively."</p>

He added, “Therefore, we hope we’ll be able to reach a consensus in the near future.”

Any prospective agreement could fall apart at the 11th hour. And if a deal goes through, there could be major obstacles to implementing an agreement between the two warring nations. It is also unclear how much grain would be released and what condition it would be in after being stored for months in a war zone.

The United Nations said on Thursday that its secretary general, António Guterres, had landed in Istanbul as part of his effort “to ensure full global access to Ukraine’s food product and Russian food fertilizer.”

“The situation remains a little bit fluid, so I can’t really say when something will be signed,” said the United Nations deputy spokesman, Farhan Haq, earlier on Thursday. “But as you can see from the fact that he is traveling to Istanbul, we are moving ahead with this.”

Last week, after meeting in Istanbul with negotiators from Ukraine, Russia and Turkey, Mr. Guterres told reporters that a deal was “technically done” and that he would interrupt his vacation and travel to Istanbul for the signing of it.

Until now, one of the major hurdles to an agreement were the mines Ukraine had placed in its ports on the Black Sea Coast to deter Russia’s warships. In late June, Mr. Guterres outlined the primary elements of a deal proposed by the United Nations and Turkey that would solve that problem.

According to three senior government officials, Mr. Guterres said Ukrainians had agreed to remove only a few of the mines and have their own Navy or Coast Guard captains steer freighters to international waters. Foreign crews would then take the ships to Istanbul, before continuing to other destinations.

A control center would be set up in Istanbul to oversee the operation, and Turkish officials would play the main role in checking the vessels to guarantee to Russia that the empty ships were not ferrying weapons back to Ukraine.

Two top senior European officials with direct knowledge of the talks, who could not be identified because of the sensitivity of the negotiations, also said on Thursday that they were optimistic a deal would be struck on Friday in Istanbul. The European Union is not party to the negotiations.

For its part, the Russian side has insisted its own grains and fertilizers are stuck because of E.U. measures — an allegation the Europeans have vehemently rejected as propaganda. Russian grains and fertilizers are not sanctioned by the European Union.

On Thursday, the bloc published a set of legal clarifications that sought to dispel any doubt that companies can export Russian grains and fertilizers without running afoul of sanctions.

Ned Price, a U.S. State Department spokesman, said the Biden administration would welcome an agreement, but stressed the importance of ensuring that Russia abides by and implements it.

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HEADLINE	07/22 Ukraine has optimism it can win
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/22/world/ukraine-war-russia#ukraine-makes-the-case-that-it-can-win-citing-recent-successes
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — Just weeks ago, Ukraine’s military was being pummeled relentlessly in the East, taking heavy casualties as it slowly gave ground to the Russian advance. Western support appeared to be softening, amid skepticism that Ukraine could win a war of attrition, or that an influx of sophisticated weapons would turn the tide.</p> <p>Through it all, the Ukrainians’ message to the world did not change: We can win. Our strategy is working, if slowly. Just keep the weapons coming.</p>

No one can say yet whether Ukraine might prevail against an invading Russian military with superior numbers and weaponry — or even what winning might look like. And Ukraine’s pleas for weapons have become such a constant refrain that some in the West have tuned it out as unrealistic background noise.

But this week, as it employs new long-range rocket systems to destroy Russian infrastructure, Ukraine is again trying to make its case to the world that it can defeat the Russians. And it is citing evidence.

Officials are pointing to successes like a recent strike in the town of Nova Kakhovka, on the Dnipro River in southern Ukraine, when the Western-supplied High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS, hit a Russian ammunition depot, sending sparkling munitions flying in all directions like a lethal fireworks display.

Several days ago, a Ukrainian artillery volley struck a key bridge on the Dnipro that was a critical crossing point for Russian supplies. Analysts say the strike augurs the start of a counteroffensive in the South, with an eye toward recapturing the key city of Kherson.

On Thursday Ukrainian officials said their forces had attacked more than 200 targets in the south using long-range missiles and artillery.

“Russia can definitely be defeated and Ukraine has already shown how,” Oleksiy Reznikov, the defense minister, said in a speech to the Atlantic Council on Tuesday.

Despite the Ukrainians’ renewed optimism, military analysts and Western officials say it’s far too soon to forecast a turn in fortunes, and that a long slog seems likely. And they caution against hanging too many hopes on particular weapons amid the chaos and fluidity of a front line that winds hundreds of miles from Kharkiv in the north to Mykolaiv in the south.

“We are now achieving what we have not achieved before,” said Taras Chmut, the director of a nongovernmental group aiding Ukrainian soldiers. “But there was no breakthrough at the front. There is no panacea, no magic wand, that will lead to victory tomorrow.”

Still, in interviews in Kyiv this week, senior Ukrainian security officials projected optimism.

“The faster our partners supply us with weapons, the faster we will end this war,” said Oleksiy Danilov, the head of Ukraine’s national security council. Ukraine has no intention of ceding territory in a negotiated settlement, as some in the West have suggested, he said. “This is just a question of who beats whom.”

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HEADLINE	07/22 Sri Lanka forces raid protest camp
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/22/world/asia/sri-lanka-protest-raid.html
GIST	<p>COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Security forces on Friday raided the protest camp at the heart of the uprising that toppled Sri Lanka’s president, breaking down tents and cordoning off large stretches of the area before dawn, in a move that could set off further unrest as the bankrupt nation seeks stability.</p> <p>The protesters, many of whom were sleeping, were caught by surprise. Hundreds of police and army personnel closed off the roads leading to the protest site outside the presidential offices in Colombo, and then began clearing a wide radius around it.</p> <p>The police said in a statement that they had detained nine protesters, two of whom were taken to a hospital “after sustaining minor injuries.”</p> <p>Activists and protest organizers expressed shock at the raid, questioning the timing and the necessity. They had already announced that they would vacate the area by midday Friday and hand the Presidential Secretariat, the last of the buildings they had occupied, and the surrounding area back to the authorities.</p>

“They came at 1:30 in the morning,” said Ranga Silva, one of the protesters who were present when the raid happened. “Everyone was sleeping.”

Condemnation was swift, with Sri Lanka’s human rights commission calling the raid a “brutal and despicable attack.” Diplomatic missions in Colombo, the capital, expressed concern.

“We urge restraint by authorities & immediate access to medical attention for those injured,” the U.S. ambassador, Julie Chung, [said on Twitter](#).

The raid came a day after Sri Lanka swore in a new president, [Ranil Wickremesinghe](#), to replace [Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who fled the country](#) this month and resigned. Protesters blamed Mr. Rajapaksa and his family, who had dominated Sri Lankan politics for years, for running the economy into the ground. The island nation of 22 million has been plagued by shortages of fuel, food and medicine in recent months.

Mr. Wickremesinghe’s rise to the presidency [completed a remarkable comeback](#) for a leader whose party had just one unelected seat in Parliament two years ago. When Mr. Rajapaksa appointed him prime minister in May, Mr. Wickremesinghe pledged support for the protest movement.

But his tone changed drastically after protesters drove Mr. Rajapaksa out and Mr. Wickremesinghe became the acting president. Protesters called for him to resign, as well, seeing him as an ally and protector of the Rajapaksa dynasty.

Mr. Wickremesinghe — whose private residence was burned down on the day of rage that forced Mr. Rajapaksa into hiding — said there were “fascists” among the protesters and promised to restore law and order, which protesters saw as a signal that a crackdown would come.

“Shameful that within a day of his election, President Ranil Wickremesinghe considered it a priority to order a midnight raid on peaceful protesters,” said Meenakshi Ganguly, the South Asia director at Human Rights Watch.

“There are the massive social and economic challenges that need to be resolved which led to the protests in the first place, something that he has been promising donors and diplomats,” Ms. Ganguly said. “And yet it appears that he wants to prove his critics right, compromise on fundamental freedoms to silence dissent.”

As the sun rose on Friday, the security forces had cordoned off the area around the presidential offices and more troops were being bused in. Lawyers and activists at the site said the police had assaulted two lawyers during the raid, while video footage showed journalists also being attacked. The BBC said one of its journalists was among those beaten.

“When we were returning from the area, a man in civilian clothes, surrounded by troops, shouted at my colleague and said he wanted to delete the videos from his phone,” said Anbarasan Ethirajan, the BBC’s South Asia editor [who was reporting from the scene](#). “Within seconds, the man punched my colleague and snatched his phone.”

Witnesses said that the security forces had closed all the roads leading from the camp site, and that injured people were stranded there without medical assistance.

As protests condemning the raid built up in another part of the city, Mr. Wickremesinghe swore in Dinesh Gunawardena, a senior member of the Rajapaksas’ S.L.P.P. party, as the country’s new prime minister.

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SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/21/british-intelligence-retools-meet-growing-challeng/
GIST	<p>ASPEN, Colo. — Britain’s storied MI6 foreign intelligence service has retooled its operations with a major focus on the threat posed by China, the agency’s director said in rare public remarks Thursday.</p> <p>“MI6 has never had any illusions about communist China,” Richard Moore, chief of what is called the Secret Intelligence Service, told the Aspen Security Conference being held here this week.</p> <p>Unlike its CIA counterpart, MI6 is a dedicated human spying agency that does not engage in intelligence analysis, Mr. Moore said. The agency was made famous by novelist Ian Fleming’s James Bond movies and by former MI6 officer John le Carre’s espionage novels.</p> <p>Mr. Moore, a former MI6 spy recruiter with extensive overseas experience, said there is a growing recognition in governments and Western publics about some of the threats posed by the Chinese to the U.S., Britain and their allies. That has meant a pronounced reorientation of the British service’s focus.</p> <p>“What is different is that we are putting more effort into China, and we now devote more effort to China than any other single subject,” he said. The China intelligence target “just moved past counterterrorism in terms of our mission.”</p> <p>MI6 is working to help policymakers deal with China from a position of strength while trying to get ahead of Chinese threats, he said, adding that the agency works closely with the CIA. The challenge for MI6 is the opaque communist system in China that is difficult to penetrate.</p> <p>U.S. intelligence officials have said Chinese counterspies rolled up scores of recruited U.S. agents in China beginning in 2010. The intelligence failure has limited the ability of U.S. intelligence to obtain secrets.</p> <p>Even with that loss, however, Mr. Moore said understanding Chinese President Xi Jinping’s strategic intent is not difficult.</p> <p>“If you read ‘Made in China 2025,’ he lays out for you their ambitions around technology and their ambition to dominate key technologies,” he said. But “if you go beneath that strategy in terms of how they implement it, how they organize, what their tactical intent is and then what are the capabilities they are building up, that’s a black box.”</p> <p>The Chinese leader has adopted what analysts say is an entrenched narrative of what he perceives as Western weakness. Mr. Moore said he worries Mr. Xi underestimates U.S. resolve and power, increasing the danger the Chinese leader will miscalculate, especially by a move against Taiwan.</p> <p>Mr. Moore said he does not believe that future conflict between the United States and China is inevitable, and differences between China and Taiwan should be settled peacefully.</p> <p>Ukraine and Taiwan</p> <p>Both Mr. Moore and CIA Director William Burns, who addressed the Aspen security gathering Wednesday, said China was closely watching Russia’s struggles in Ukraine for clues as to how a Taiwan military campaign might unfold.</p> <p>Mr. Burns said he would not underestimate Mr. Xi’s determination to take Taiwan through military action in the next few years.</p> <p>The Chinese leader is working to make sure the People’s Liberation Army has the capabilities for a successful invasion of the democratic island, which is about 100 miles off the Chinese coast.</p>

“The Chinese leadership is trying to study the lessons of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and what it tells them,” he said. A major lesson for Beijing from Russian President Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine is that decisive victories cannot be achieved with “underwhelming force.”

The Russian military sent about 190,000 troops into Ukraine in February and expected the government in Kyiv to fall within a week. Instead, Ukrainian military forces fought back fiercely.

China’s political and military leaders think a successful attack against Taiwan will require overwhelming military power, the CIA chief said. In addition to using military force, the Chinese will need to attack Taiwan “in the information space” and prepare for economic and other sanctions from the outside world, Mr. Burns said.

Mr. Xi and other Chinese leaders are “unsettled” by the beating the Russian military has taken in Ukraine, he said, and Beijing is concerned that the invasion has driven European nations closer to the U.S.

Mr. Moore said it is too early to tell what lessons the Chinese leadership and military are drawing from the fighting in Ukraine. However, there is intelligence that the Chinese are “going into overdrive trying to work out what they think of this,” he said.

“As always with the Chinese, that is mixed in with a sort of ideological overlay that they are trying to draw the right lessons which will be approved of by President Xi as they go into the party congress,” Mr. Moore said, referring to a major party gathering set for the fall.

The result is that it is difficult to assess the likelihood of events such as a Chinese invasion of Taiwan.

“But I am very clear — and this is one of the reasons why it is so essential that we tough it out on Ukraine, and we keep going through this winter and we help the Ukrainians to win, at least negotiate from a position of significant strength — is because Xi Jinping is watching this like a hawk,” he said.

Influence operations

In addition to spying activities, China also is using the United Front Work Department, a party organ, to conduct covert influence operations. British security agencies earlier this year identified a lawyer, Christine Lee, as engaged in covert “political interference activities” on behalf of the Chinese state.

Mr. Moore said influencing other nations is a normal diplomatic function. “It’s influencing other countries toward your position covertly, undeclared, using funding, that’s not [permitted],” he said, adding “there’s a lot of that going on.”

Chinese intelligence agents are “not 10 feet tall” and MI6 is determined to conduct counterspying operations against them, Mr. Moore said.

“We have this huge advantage in that we have friends, we have allies, we have the ability to work in a trusted way to take on this challenge,” he said.

China and Russia are moving into a closer strategic partnership following the agreement in February that called for “no limits” on cooperation between Beijing and Moscow, the MI6 chief noted.

“When President Xi says these things, he means them and we ought to listen hard,” he said. “I think that relationship is very clear. The Chinese are helping the Russians over Ukraine by buying their oil.”

Mr. Moore said Mr. Putin has failed in three main goals for the invasion of Ukraine — ousting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, capturing Kyiv and dividing and weakening the NATO alliance.

NATO is extremely united and expanding with the proposed addition of formerly neutral Sweden and Finland.

	<p>Mr. Moore said Russian intelligence services in Europe were hit hard by the post-invasion expulsions of some 400 Russian agents, reducing the Moscow spy presence by half. Two “illegal” intelligence officers — those operating without diplomatic cover, also were caught recently, including one in the Netherlands who was sentenced to 15 years in prison.</p> <p>Like the Russian military, “I don’t think they’re having a great war,” Mr. Moore said of Russian intelligence.</p> <p>The CIA’s Mr. Burns said Mr. Putin has hardened his views on Russia’s drive to become a major world power again and noted that his “appetite for risk has grown.” And he dismissed reports that the Russian leader was ill, either mentally or physically</p> <p>“As far as we can tell, he’s fairly healthy,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Army rely more on reserves as ranks shrink
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/21/army-shift-1-billion-recruiting-retention-efforts/
GIST	<p>The Army will shift about \$1 billion to recruiting programs and will rely more heavily on reserve units as its ranks dwindle and the service struggles to attract new soldiers, Army officials said in a memo this week that described a high-stakes “war for talent” that confronts America’s armed forces and comes at a crucial moment for national security.</p> <p>Faced with demographic shifts and a red-hot civilian job market, Army officials said the number of active-duty soldiers is expected to drop considerably over the next several years.</p> <p>They said the Army’s strength will be about 466,000 by the end of the fiscal year. It could drop to as low as 445,000 by the end of 2023, they said, “barring a significant positive change in the current recruiting environment.”</p> <p>The forecast leaves the Army about 10,000 soldiers short of its planned end strength this year. If the trend continues as Pentagon leaders expect, the Army will fall much shorter from its goal next year.</p> <p>Army leaders acknowledged the scope of the problems and said it will take an all-hands-on-deck approach to turn the tide. With two months left in the fiscal year, the service is just 50% of the way to reaching its annual recruiting target.</p> <p>“The United States Army exists for one purpose, to protect the nation by fighting and winning our nation’s wars as a member of the Joint Force, and our readiness depends on a quality all-volunteer force. This is not a recruiter problem. This is an Army problem,” Army Secretary Christine Wormuth and Army Chief of Staff Gen. James C. McConville said in the memo released Wednesday evening. “We are in a war for talent, and it will take all our people — soldiers across all components, families, Army civilians, and soldiers for life — to fight and win this war.”</p> <p>Recruitment officials for the Air Force, Navy and Marines say they are facing similar challenges.</p> <p>The shortfall in the ranks is growing at a challenging time for the Pentagon. Russia’s Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine has sparked significant deployments of U.S. troops to Europe, including the establishment of a permanent headquarters for the 5th Army Corps in Poland that President Biden announced this month. It’s the biggest in a set of moves to ramp up U.S. ground forces in Europe, and much of that burden will fall on the Army.</p> <p>The Pentagon also is racing to expand its presence in the Pacific amid rising tensions with China and fears that a Chinese military move on Taiwan is on the horizon. The Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps will</p>

bear much of that responsibility, but the Army, the largest of the military services, also will play a key role.

Service officials acknowledge that the Army's force structure may need revisions if its ranks keep shrinking.

"We don't need to do that immediately. But if we don't arrest the decline that we're seeing right now in end strength, that could be a possibility in the future," Gen. Joseph Martin, vice chief of staff of the Army, told a House Armed Services subcommittee this week.

Army leaders blamed a combination of circumstances for the problems, including a shrinking percentage of young Americans fit for service and an inability to recruit in high schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many students attended school virtually.

Remote learning, they said, seems to have had a negative impact on the number of young Americans qualified for military service, including "a decline in academic and physical fitness levels."

Although inflation looms as a major problem for the economy, the U.S. job market continues to post strong numbers. The overall jobless rate is just 3.6%, and youth unemployment — which soared to nearly 30% at the height of the COVID-linked economic shutdown of 2021 — is at a historically low 8.1%. Military services have historically posted stronger recruiting numbers when the alternatives in the private sector are not so attractive.

Deeper problems

The Army says it sees much deeper problems across U.S. society. Officials cited a "knowledge gap" that has prevented the Army from reaching many Americans and an "identity gap" that keeps potential recruits from seeing themselves in the service or understanding its culture.

Perhaps most troubling, military leaders said, is that young Americans appear to become disillusioned with the armed forces, creating a "trust gap" that is difficult to bridge.

"Younger Americans are losing trust and confidence in many American institutions, including the military," Ms. Wormuth and Gen. McConville said.

Their memo laid out a host of initiatives and programs to attract recruits and keep enlisted soldiers in the ranks. Officials also said they will have to make sweeping changes to the 2023 budget to address looming problems.

Ms. Wormuth and Gen. McConville said they will shift up to \$1.2 billion from other Army programs to recruiting initiatives, retention bonuses and other efforts.

Money also will be shifted to Army Reserve units, they said, "to meet operational demands" in light of the service's manpower shortage.

The Army also will launch future soldier pilot programs, extend the service's best recruiters, increase funding for enlistment bonuses, offer recruits a greater voice in where they will be stationed, open more regional marketing offices across the country and take other steps to attract recruits.

The latest troubling recruiting data will add fuel to criticism of the Army's punishment of soldiers who refuse to receive COVID-19 vaccinations. As of July 15, 1,336 active-duty soldiers were removed after refusing the vaccine, officials said.

Another 11,056 Army National Guard service members and 6,733 Army Reserve troops have refused the shot, according to the latest data. None of them has been formally discharged from the ranks.

HEADLINE	07/21 Drone near D.C. airport causes 110 delays
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/21/drone-flying-near-reagan-national-runway-causes-ov/
GIST	<p>A drone flying near Reagan National Airport prompted a brief ground stop and caused more than 100 delayed flights in and out of the Arlington-based airport on Thursday.</p> <p>CNN reported an advisory from the Federal Aviation Administration around 1:40 p.m. that said “drone activity near the runway at the airport” was witnessed, and that officials should “expect holding for the next two hours.”</p> <p>But around 2:20 p.m. WTOP reported that the ground stop was lifted, though activity at the airport didn’t resume right away.</p> <p>The station reported 110 delays and eight cancellations were blamed on the drone as of Thursday afternoon.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Extreme heat warnings, advisories 28 states
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jul/21/extreme-heat-warnings-advisories-28-states
GIST	<p>The National Weather Service has warned that extreme heat will affect more than 100 million people in the US this week, with triple-digit temperatures in some states and broken temperature records in many areas across the country.</p> <p>“Above-normal temperatures will continue to prevail across much of the US through the end of the week, with a significant portion of the population remaining under heat-related advisories and warnings,” the agency said.</p> <p>Heat warnings and advisories have been put in place for 28 states, with central and southern states facing the brunt of the scorching heat.</p> <p>Some parts of Oklahoma reached 115F (46C) this week, while the Dallas area hit 109F (42C).</p> <p>Emergency medical services in Tulsa, Oklahoma, have reported an increase in heat-related emergency calls this year. The city’s Emergency Medical Services Authority said it has received nearly 250 calls this year, a number typically reached later in the summer.</p> <p>“It’s very concerning,” the department’s Adam Paluka told CNN. “Especially because the amount of patients that are being transported indicates that some of those calls are heatstrokes, which can be deadly.”</p> <p>In the north-east, where temperatures are settling in at more than 90F (32C), city leaders have warned residents to limit outside activity during the hottest times of the day.</p> <p>Philadelphia declared a “heat health emergency” for Thursday and has set up a “heatline” number for residents experiencing intense heat. Boston has opened community centers and pools as places for residents to cool down.</p> <p>“It is clear that a changing climate is a risk to our health,” Boston mayor Michelle Wu said Wednesday. “I urge everyone to stay cool and safe, and check on your neighbors this week.”</p> <p>In Phoenix, America’s hottest city, an extreme heat warning was in place for Thursday and Friday. The temperature is forecast to hit 113F (45c) on Thursday afternoon and 115F (46C) on Friday afternoon. Heat advisories are only issued when temperatures are higher than average for the time of year, and in Phoenix in July that means temperatures over 112F. So far this year, the city has broken or equaled four daytime high records and nine nighttime lows.</p>

	<p>The impact of heat is cumulative and the body only begins to recover when temperatures drop below 80F. Climate scientists have warned that heatwaves – which have spread throughout Europe and Asia this summer – will be more intense and prolonged if the climate emergency is not addressed. A study published in May showed that human influence on the climate made a particular heatwave in south Asia 30 times more likely to have happened.</p> <p>Speaking in Somerset, Massachusetts, about the climate crisis on Wednesday, Joe Biden said that global heating is an “emergency” but failed to declare a national emergency, as activists hoped the president would. Such a declaration would allow Biden to block crude oil imports or to direct the military to work on renewable energy production. The White House said that a formal emergency declaration is “still on the table”.</p> <p>“It is literally, not figuratively, a clear and present danger,” Biden said. “The health of our citizens and communities are literally at stake.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 MI6: half of Russia spies in Europe expelled
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/jul/21/half-of-russian-spies-in-europe-expelled-since-ukraine-invasion-says-mi6-chief
GIST	<p>Half of all the Russian spies operating under diplomatic cover around Europe have been expelled since the start of the war in Ukraine, the chief of MI6 has told a US security conference.</p> <p>Richard Moore, who heads British foreign intelligence, said the expulsions of about 400 Russian diplomats from countries in continental Europe, including France and Germany, had dramatically reduced the Kremlin’s espionage capabilities.</p> <p>Speaking at the Aspen security conference, he said western intelligence agencies had made “pretty concerted” efforts to disrupt Russian spying networks since the invasion.</p> <p>“So across Europe, roughly half – at last count something north of 400 Russian intelligence officers operating under diplomatic cover – have been expelled,” Moore said. “That’s probably reduced their ability to do their business to spy for Russia in Europe by half.”</p> <p>It is the first time that MI6 has gone public with its estimate of the impact of the coordinated expulsions in response to the invasion in February. Although the figure of 400, across a wide range of nations, had been previously tallied, the proportion had not.</p> <p>Russian spies, as with intelligence officers of almost every major country, typically pretend to be undertaking cover jobs at their country’s embassy. Only a handful of long-term spies – so-called illegals – pretend to be ordinary citizens, operating outside the diplomatic framework.</p> <p>Germany kicked out 40 Russian diplomats in April, and France 41. Britain is one of the few countries not to have expelled any diplomats accused of spying, although that is largely because the UK told 23 to leave in 2018 in the aftermath of the Salisbury poisonings and it is not believed any have been replaced.</p> <p>Moore said two illegals had been unmasked, including a Russian pretending to be Irish-Brazilian who had tried and failed to secure an internship at the international criminal court in The Hague in April. A Brazilian court has since sentenced Sergey Cherkasov to 15 years in jail for using false identity documents.</p> <p>Moore said he believed the war in Ukraine was “a winnable campaign” for Kyiv and that Russia would “increasingly find it difficult to supply manpower and material over the next few weeks” as the war headed towards a critical phase before the weather turned.</p>

	<p>The spy chief appeared to hint that Ukraine, with the support of growing quantities of western weapons, would attempt to stage a counterattack in the coming weeks. “It’s important, I think to the Ukrainians themselves, that they demonstrate their ability to strike back,” he said.</p> <p>Moore said he agreed with his counterpart at the CIA, Bill Burns, that there was “no evidence that Putin is suffering from serious ill health”. There had been speculation in the early phases of the war that the Russian president had cancer or another serious illness, and had been taking steroids.</p> <p>Moore also agreed with the CIA chief that China was not supplying Russia with weapons because Beijing was nervous about being hit with western economic sanctions, but he said he thought that “if they could provide weapons and get away with it, they would”.</p> <p>He said China was “going into overdrive” to work out what lessons it could draw from the Ukraine war and the western response so far. “It’s too early to tell what lessons they will draw from Putin’s misadventures,” Moore said, and he repeated a previous warning that Beijing should not underestimate western resolve to protect Taiwan from any attempt at forced reunification.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Expand law enforcement training facilities?
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/inslee-law-enforcement-expansion-training-facilities-recruitment/281-fb082f77-f6b5-433b-878a-4980aa9949ea https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/four-new-police-training-academies-proposed-help-tackle-state-police-shortage/N4UMGLS3NRB5TP4D2UFMJL3CVE/
GIST	<p>BURIEN, Wash. — Washington Gov. Jay Inslee on Thursday proposed expanding the state's law enforcement training campus in a push to reduce officer shortages and increase agencies' abilities to recruit and retain officers.</p> <p>On Wednesday, the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) released a crime report for 2021 which highlighted the state's decrease in police staffing.</p> <p>The executive director of WASPC said Washington has the lowest per capita rate of officers the state has seen since the association began tracking the data in 1980. It's also the lowest in the nation. The national average per capita rate for officers is 2.33 officers per 1,000, according to the FBI.</p> <p>On Thursday, Inslee joined local and state law enforcement leaders to announce support for expanding the state Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC). The governor's office said new regional training centers would accelerate training and would aid in recruitment efforts.</p> <p>"Right now we have 134 recruits, who unfortunately have to wait an average of four months just to start this training. That is not acceptable to us," said Inslee.</p> <p>Currently, every law enforcement officer in the state is trained and certified by CJTC, undergoing a 19-week law enforcement academy in Burien.</p> <p>An expansion would mean those looking to become law enforcement officers could complete training closer to home at proposed regional facilities instead of commuting to the state's facility in Burien.</p> <p>"Currently, recruits must attend training just at this location. They've got to travel, they got to be away from their homes and their families," said Inslee. "This has created a logjam in the process. It creates a barrier to recruitment of fine people and we need to do better."</p> <p>Washington state lost nearly 500 police officers statewide in 2021 as the state's population grew more than the population of Everett, according to the crime report released Wednesday.</p>

The number of commissioned law enforcement officers decreased 4.4%. The per capita rate of law enforcement officers fell to 1.38 per 1,000 statewide.

"Right now, a lot of agencies are treading water. Not every single one. Not every single agency is in a staffing crisis; many are," said Steven Strachan, executive director of WASPC. "These things are problems with solutions, and that is to support good policing and to recognize that public safety is important."

Washington has the fewest police officers per capita in the country. Now, Gov. Jay Inslee has announced a new plan to help fix the shortage of police officers that focuses on bringing in new recruits.

In a news conference on Thursday, the governor and many police chiefs and sheriffs said they want to see more training centers across the state, adding locations to Pasco, Everett, Bellingham and Vancouver. Spokane County is already working on building another police academy in a separate project.

The announcement brought top brass from all over the state to the Criminal Justice Training Center in Burien, with law enforcement from Skagit to Spokane counties.

"The turnout you see today speaks volumes. This is a topic of high concern," said Steve Crown, police chief of the City of Wenatchee. Crown is also president of the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.

The plan would add four more police academy training facilities that will use the same coursework currently used in Burien, where the only police academy in the state is located.

"This has created a logjam in the process," Inslee said. "Right now we have 130 recruits who have to wait four months just to start this training. That's not acceptable," Inslee said.

"I'm supportive of this approach to create regional academies across the state," said King County Sheriff Patti Cole-Tindall. "The result will be more officers on the street and will have a direct impact on crime reduction," she said.

Several police chiefs also mentioned the traveling distance to Burien as another barrier to recruiting. Pasco Police Chief Ken Roske shared examples of people interested in the job that couldn't train and live in Burien.

"Unfortunately, the qualified candidate could not leave her family, her children, for four-and-a-half months. She certainly could've left the academy during the day and went back home," Roske said.

State senator John Lovick (D-Mill Creek) says he will introduce the plan next session.

"This will bring relief to law enforcement agencies that have been overburdened and understaffed," Lovick said.

KIRO 7's Deedee Sun asked the governor and lawmakers how many taxpayer dollars the new plans would cost.

"Whatever it costs to make this available is a tremendous asset. To have a well-trained officer rather than nobody there to answer your 911 call is a heck of a good deal," Inslee said.

Lovick said they are still working on figuring out the price tag.

"We not going to let cost stop us from doing what we need to do," Lovick said.

"When you see these great men and women," Lovick said. "They want to keep people safe in their homes, on our streets, and protect our children in our schools. So cost will have nothing to do with that," he said.

	If the state legislature passes the plan in the next session, the first new training facility would be in Pasco, because the city already has the infrastructure and location selected. Other locations would be added after that.
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HEADLINE	07/21 No charges against police in Lyles' case
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/no-charges-officers-charleena-lyles/281-d2b573ce-47b2-4ae6-af0a-72d141d9c3ea
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Citing a lack of "sufficient evidence to prove a criminal act," King County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Satterberg announced he will not file charges against the two officers who shot and killed Charleena Lyles in 2017.</p> <p>The announcement follows the conclusion of the King County inquest into Lyles' death earlier in July. An inquest jury concluded that officers Steven McNew and Jason Anderson were justified in their use of deadly force.</p> <p>In a memorandum, Satterberg wrote that in order to prosecute the officers for any degree of homicide, the state would have to disprove justifiable homicide under the "malice" and "good faith" standards. There is "no evidence to overcome this defense," Satterberg wrote.</p> <p>Despite the investigation concluding there isn't enough evidence to prove the shooting of Lyles was criminal, Satterberg said in a prepared statement that "it also does not mean that the events that unfolded went right - they didn't."</p> <p>"Ms. Lyles' 911 call to report a crime resulted in her death," the statement reads. "And the entire sequence of events underscores the importance of expanding behavioral health experts who can work alongside police officers when responding to people in crisis."</p> <p>On June 18, 2017, Charleena Lyles called 911 asking for help at her north Seattle apartment. There was a caution alert attached to her name due to a previous incident where she threatened law enforcement. Officers Steven McNew and Jason Anderson arrived at the apartment.</p> <p>After being let into the apartment to investigate an alleged burglary, the officers said Lyles' demeanor changed. According to information presented to the inquest jury earlier in July, Lyles threatened the officers with a knife.</p> <p>The officers ordered Lyles to stand back, which the jury found she initially complied with. The majority of the jury found Lyles then stopped complying with the orders from the officers.</p> <p>The officers shot Lyles multiple times.</p> <p>Lyles, who was pregnant, was killed in front of her children.</p> <p>The six jurors determined that at least one of the officers did not comply with department policy when it comes to use of weapons such as Tasers. Neither was carrying one at the time of the shooting. However, the jury found a Taser would not have been appropriate use of force for the situation.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Renton apartment building fire reignites
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/renton/apartment-building-car-fire-renton/281-042bc11c-6215-41f6-8fc8-89dcd8d90c78
GIST	RENTON, Wash. — A three-alarm fire that damaged 12 apartment units and destroyed multiple cars Wednesday in Renton reignited early Thursday morning.

	<p>Firefighters returned to the Fairwood Landing Apartments for a “working commercial fire” just before 2:30 a.m. Thursday, Zone3 Fire REHAB tweeted.</p> <p>Smoke could still be seen coming from the roof around 5:45 a.m. as fire crews were still on the scene putting out hot spots. Officials said the fire was extinguished by 7:30 a.m.</p> <p>No one was inside the building at the time.</p> <p>Firefighters first responded to the apartment complex on the 14000 block of Southeast 177th Street around 6:30 p.m. Wednesday for a reported car fire. When firefighters arrived, they found multiple cars and the apartment building on fire, according to the Renton Firefighters Local 864.</p> <p>Crews on scene reported fire on the second story of the apartment building and requested backup. The firefighters' union attributed the quick spread of the fire to the dry, hot weather.</p> <p>Twelve units in the building are damaged and can't be occupied, according to Zone 3 Public Information Officer Eric Autry. The American Red Cross is working to help those who are displaced find shelter.</p> <p>It's estimated that seven cars were damaged or destroyed in the blaze. There were 29 different fire apparatuses from four different departments responding to the fire.</p> <p>The cause of the fire is under investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 USAO: reports King Co. voter intimidation
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/us-attorney-now-looking-into-reports-king-county-voter-intimidation/JLSPSYNTTBGPBLZAAPXPMG2MSU/
GIST	<p>KING COUNTY, Wash. — Concerned voters contacted KIRO 7 after signs claiming voter surveillance started showing up next to more than a dozen King County ballot boxes. In the days since, King County’s Elections Chair Julie Wise called for the signs to be removed, saying they’re blatant attempts at voter intimidation. On Thursday, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Washington Nick Brown announced his office is also looking into the strange signs.</p> <p>“We want to make sure voters can take the time to fill out their ballots and drop those without being intimidated, without being surveilled,” said Brown.</p> <p>These signs claimed the boxes were under surveillance and implied people could be breaking the law. The postings also featured a QR code leading to a form on the King County G.O.P official website where you could report suspicious activity. The King County Republican Party has already denounced the signs, issuing a cease-and-desist order to those involved.</p> <p>“We just want to make clear that that type of activity or any type of activity might be threatening to voters could be a violation of federal law,” said Brown.</p> <p>According to Brown’s office: “Under federal law, it is a felony to intimidate or threaten other persons to discourage them from voting or for assisting others in voting. This crime is punishable by up to five years in prison.”</p> <p>However, before any of that comes to fruition, intent must be identified. FBI Special Agent Kelly Smith says pinpointing a motive is the top priority for election crimes.</p> <p>“What is causing someone to do something? Are they trying to interfere in the election?” said Smith.</p>

	The special agent says he can't confirm whether or not the bureau is currently investigating, but if there's enough evidence, a crime could be charged in the county and federal court.
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HEADLINE	07/21 Officials address election misinformation
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/secretary-state-addresses-election-misinformation-after-signs-appear-near-drop-boxes/Q5HQHV57Q5BCLA2SPC2WPHZXN4/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — State officials held a roundtable discussion Thursday morning to discuss what they say are likely false narratives surrounding the 2022 elections in Washington.</p> <p>Officials from the Secretary of State Elections Division, the University of Washington Center for an Informed Public and Secretary of State Steve Hobbs met in South Lake Union.</p> <p>Hobbs emphasized the importance of knowing how elections work so the public doesn't fall prey to misinformation.</p> <p>The Center for an Informed Public is part of the election integrity partnership, which tracks rumors, misinformation and threats.</p> <p>During the 2020 election the center tracked 400 incidents.</p> <p>Earlier this week, KIRO 7 reported that strange signs were placed at nearly a dozen ballot drop-box locations around the Ballard area.</p> <p>The signs warned voters the drop box was under surveillance.</p> <p>Voter intimidation is illegal locally and federally.</p> <p>"It's very disheartening and sad that there's groups out there surveilling these drop boxes out there. It's a little intimidating. Nobody wants to be surveilled, especially from an unknown group that they are used to or not. I mean, in a way this could be voter suppression," Hobbs said.</p> <p>King County director of elections, Julie Wise, called for the signs to be removed.</p> <p>Elections officials said they believe the signs were a targeted effort by party-affiliated activists to intimidate and discourage voters from using secure ballot drop boxes.</p> <p>Wise said she and her team are passing along any information about the signs to the King County Sheriff's Office for further investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Spokane Co. fire districts seek volunteers
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/spokane-county/spokane-county-fire-districts-recruiting-volunteers/293-8da8101c-b3cb-4895-8212-04a09a5b36ab
GIST	<p>SPOKANE COUNTY, Wash — Despite the late start, fire season is upon the Inland Northwest and fire districts in Spokane County have been busy trying to recruit volunteers.</p> <p>For example, Spokane County Fire District 10 has recently posted several times on its Facebook page, asking for volunteers to join them in their mission of protecting their community.</p> <p>According to Deputy Fire Chief Don Malone, the department received grant money that helped pay for the added advertising.</p> <p>But, getting volunteers is a year-round mission for fire crews.</p>

“A lot of our volunteers that come to work with us, they’re looking for full-time career jobs as well. So, a lot of times we train them up, we’ll get them, we’ll get them on shift and they’re only here for a couple of years until they get hired off somewhere else, so it’s kind of a revolving door,” said Malone.

According to Malone, SCFD 10 has about 15 career firefighters and around 60 volunteers, but the ideal number would be even higher at around 75.

But, it’s not just numbers they take into consideration.

“I would rather have 30 volunteers that are engaged 100 percent of the time,” said Malone. “So, it’s really a balance of how much activity that they can respond to or be a part of.”

Across the county, Spokane County Fire District 3 is also trying to recruit more volunteers.

Tom Brunke is SCFD 3’s Division Chief of Recruitment and Retention. He said the fire district has held steady over the years with volunteer numbers staying around 125.

However, SCFD 3 officials said their call numbers have gone up about 10% each year and their participation has also dropped over the years.

“I think life gets in the way. People are busier now than they have been,” said Brunke.

The drive to hire more firefighters is a big part of SCFD 3’s EMS levy on the upcoming August ballot.

If it passes, Brunke said it could help drop response times and staff more stations.

Yet, even with more calls and lower participation numbers, fire officials from both SCFD 3 and SCFD 10 said they’re ready for whatever call sparks up.

Brunke said the volunteers “have a big heart.”

“When we need them, we call on them, they come running,” said Brunke.

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For more information about becoming a volunteer firefighter for SCFD 10, [click here](#).
For more information about becoming a volunteer firefighter for SCFD 3, [click here](#).

HEADLINE	07/21 WA hospitals face massive financial crisis
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/wa-hospitals-facing-unsustainable-financial-losses-in-danger-of-cutting-services/
GIST	<p>Washington’s hospitals are facing massive financial losses after the first quarter of 2022, placing the state’s health care system in the most precarious situation many hospital leaders say they’ve seen in their lives.</p> <p>According to a recent survey conducted by the Washington State Hospital Association, hospitals across the state suffered a net loss of about \$929 million in the first three months of 2022. While operating revenue increased by 5%, operating expenses increased by 11%, which — combined with nonoperating investment losses — resulted in a total loss of about 13%.</p> <p>“The financial challenges revealed by the survey are really quite grave,” WSHA CEO Cassie Sauer said at a news briefing Thursday. “Hospitals’ ability to sustain all the health care services they provide in the face of a dire financial situation is in question.”</p> <p>The hospitals that responded to the survey represent about 97% of all inpatient, acute beds statewide. All 52 urban hospitals and health systems, as well as 18 of 34 independent, rural hospitals, reported losses.</p>

If the trend continues, Sauer said, hospitals will likely have to cut certain services or close inpatient units. The biggest concern, she added, is that some health care systems could be forced to close or file for bankruptcy if the financial losses persist.

“This level of loss is unsustainable,” said Eric Lewis, WSHA’s chief financial officer. “It is like nothing I’ve ever seen in my career.”

Lewis attributed the recent losses to several factors, including chronically low Medicaid reimbursement, high inflation and labor shortages — which have resulted in labor, drug and supply costs increasing faster than payment rates — and an [increasing number of high-cost patients staying in hospitals for long periods of time](#), instead of being discharged to long-term care facilities to complete their recovery.

In addition, while many large urban hospitals were able to use federal relief funding to cover financial losses at the beginning of last year, those dollars have run out, he said.

“It’s going to be hard to fix,” Lewis said. “Large losses continued in the second quarter and significant losses are expected during the last six months of 2022.”

At Confluence Health in Central Washington, for example, reports show the hospital system lost nearly \$5 million in the first quarter of 2022, said Chief Financial Officer Tom Legel.

Expenses are “significantly” higher than they were last year at Providence hospitals in Spokane and Stevens counties, too, said CEO Susan Stacey. Now, Providence Inland Northwest is spending between \$4 million and \$5 million a month more than what the system has spent in the past.

“There’s simply not enough people working in health care right now,” Stacey said. “Nor is there a long line of people waiting to enter the field.”

While many hospitals throughout the state have utilized contract health care staffers — often known as travelers — to fill scheduling holes for a limited amount of time throughout the pandemic, their rates are much more expensive than full-time, long-term staffers.

“As we work to continue to reduce the temporary staff ... their costs have been impossible to cover,” Stacey said. “We risk burning out our remaining caregivers who are also exhausted both mentally and physically.”

It’s not just travelers, she added. Hospitals’ own staffers are also continuing to pick up overtime and extra shifts, which also adds to higher labor costs.

If the significant financial losses persist, hospitals will have a harder time increasing wages, recruiting and retaining staff, paying off existing debts (often for construction or new equipment purchases), keeping up with new health care technology, and maintaining other community health services, Sauer said.

In rural parts of the state, obstetric services are at the greatest risk of being reduced or cut first, according to leaders from Coulee Medical Center, Lake Chelan Health and Forks Community Hospital.

While hospitals are hoping for some short-term solutions — like getting the state to help move patients from acute care into more appropriate settings — longer-term fixes will require support from the Legislature, said Chelene Whiteaker, WSHA’s senior vice president for government affairs.

During the 2023 legislative session, Whiteaker said, WSHA’s priorities will include increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates to hospitals, which haven’t increased in two decades, and expanding behavioral health services, staffers and facilities.

	“It’s important that we openly talk about this issue,” Stacey said. “Our caregivers and our patients need to know our hospitals are suffering financially. We want people to come to the hospital when they’re sick, but right now, that is being threatened.”
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HEADLINE	07/21 Weak jobs report signals hiring slowdown?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/in-washingtons-sluggish-job-market-even-high-flying-tech-sector-feeling-inflation-recession-fears/
GIST	<p>Job growth in Washington picked up only slightly in June and remains far behind levels earlier this year as employers, including tech firms like Microsoft, appear to be weighing the impacts of inflation and a global slowdown.</p> <p>Washington added just 2,500 jobs in June, the state Employment Security Department reported Wednesday. That’s better than May’s 1,200-job loss, but was still the smallest monthly gain since May 2021 and well below the average monthly growth of 15,000 jobs the state has seen since June 2021. Unemployment in June was unchanged at 3.9%.</p> <p>“Labor market conditions remain strong for now, but hiring is showing signs of slowing,” Paul Turek, ESD’s state economist, said in a statement. “Efforts underway to curb high inflation — such as raising interest rates — will likely continue to dampen job growth and hiring as the year progresses.”</p> <p>That dampening apparently extends to parts of our state’s tech sector, which had come through the pandemic relatively unscathed.</p> <p>Although tech employers added 2,400 jobs — the most of any sector, according to ESD data — some employers seem to be ratcheting back recruitment efforts.</p> <p>On Wednesday, Microsoft said it was eliminating many open positions, including in its cloud-computing business and its security software unit, although it expected overall headcount to continue to grow.</p> <p>“As Microsoft gets ready for the new fiscal year, it is making sure the right resources are aligned to the right opportunity,” the Redmond-based tech giant told Bloomberg in an emailed statement about the hiring cuts.</p> <p>It’s a similar story in other parts of the Seattle-area tech sector, where hiring remains strong but the market is no longer quite so tilted in job-seekers’ favor, said Alicia Evans, market director at the Seattle office of recruiting firm Robert Half, who focuses on the Seattle-area tech sector.</p> <p>“The market has shifted from candidates being able to ask for everything they wanted, plus the moon and the stars,” Evans said, adding that the shift is affecting what candidates can expect for salary and for pandemic-related perks such as being able to work fully remotely.</p> <p>Despite that recent change, the tech sector continues to need lots of workers, Evans said. She likened the change to what’s happening in the housing market: “Did it slow down? Or is it just actually getting back to normal?”</p> <p>Other Washington industries that saw job growth in June were manufacturing, which added 2,100 jobs, and construction, with 2,000.</p> <p>But those gains were partly outweighed by losses in other sectors. Leisure and hospitality employers saw hiring fall by 500 in June, ESD data showed. Government employers lost 1,200 jobs and professional and business services lost 2,300 jobs.</p> <p>And, as has been true for much of the pandemic, the sluggishness in hiring wasn’t spread equally across Washington.</p>

	<p>June hiring in King and Snohomish counties jumped by a relatively healthy 8,000 while unemployment was just 2.6%, said Jacob Vigdor, an economist with the University of Washington Evans School of Public Policy who follows state and local job markets.</p> <p>In Washington's 37 other counties, by contrast, employment fell and unemployment stood at 4.8%, Vigdor said. "That puts the 37 counties about a year behind King and Snohomish in terms of pandemic recovery," he said.</p> <p>"We have a 'tale of two regions' going on."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 WA can log public lands but doesn't have to
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/wa-supreme-court-rules-in-favor-of-state-on-logging-public-lands/
GIST	<p>Washington state is not constitutionally obligated to harvest forests or maximize revenue on state land, the Washington Supreme Court ruled unanimously on Thursday.</p> <p>For decades, the Department of Natural Resources harvested state forests to fund grade schools and universities based on an understanding of the state constitution, federal stipulations and legal precedent that land entrusted to the state must be used to maximize revenue and support public institutions.</p> <p>But the court said this week the state isn't required to do either, a pivotal ruling that gives agency officials and lawmakers more discretion when interpreting the state constitution's policy on managing state forests.</p> <p>While the court ruled in favor of the state, conservationists hailed the decision as a towering victory that paves the way for the state to maintain public forests in a way that takes greater account of endangered species, habitat loss, unemployment and climate change.</p> <p>"That's what we were looking for, is that flexibility to now have a broader policy discussion of different ways to manage (Department of Natural Resources) lands," said Paula Swedeen, policy director of Conservation Northwest, an environmental advocacy organization.</p> <p>The state Supreme Court's majority opinion, written by Justice G. Helen Whitener, said the use of revenue generated by logging public lands may be constitutionally protected, but it's not the only way to manage public land for the benefit of "all people," as the state constitution states.</p> <p>"There appear to be myriad ways (the Department of Natural Resources) could choose to generate revenue from the state and forest board lands or otherwise put them to use for the benefit of the enumerated beneficiaries," the state Supreme Court's majority opinion stated.</p> <p>In <i>Conservation Northwest v. Commissioner of Public Lands</i>, conservationists challenged the underlying assumptions of the state's management of land entrusted to Washington when it became a state in the late 19th century.</p> <p>Conservation NW, the Washington Environmental Council, Olympic Forest Coalition and eight individuals argued the state's prioritization of timber sales undercuts its other obligations to the public, namely efforts to counteract climate change, wildfires and land erosion. The lawsuit addressed two Department of Natural Resources resolutions concerning the protection of marbled murrelets — a small seabird found commonly along the northern Pacific Coast — and sustainable timber harvests on state and county lands.</p> <p>The same lawsuit called for the court to interpret the state constitution's language on public lands. The constitution states "all public lands granted to the state are held in trust for all people."</p>

The complaint argued that using revenue from logging on public land to support certain projects does not reflect the interests of all people, and the state should instead manage the land in a way that reflects the growing need for sustainable jobs, climate resilience, salmon recovery and habitat restoration.

The state agency contended that it was acting on legal precedent.

The court held Thursday that the state has obligations to manage the land according to the Omnibus Enabling Act of 1889, in which the federal government entrusted the state with approximately 3 million acres of forested territory “for the support of common schools” and other public institutions.

Public Lands Commissioner Hillary Franz said the ruling gives her agency more leeway in how it achieves that.

“I also recognize that in the face of a rapidly changing climate, we must do everything we can to safeguard public lands and protect our forests,” Franz said in a statement.

The state and Legislature “just need to generate revenue somehow, but they have all kinds of discretion that they didn’t have yesterday,” said Peter Goldman, founding director of the Washington Forest Law Center, an environmental nonprofit based in the state. “We lost the battle, but we won the war.”

The tethering of public schools to timber revenue has long been a heated controversy in Washington.

Earlier this week, Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal put forward recommendations to decouple the state’s K-12 Common School Trust from funding for public school construction.

Currently, revenue from timber sales and leasing on roughly 1.8 million acres of public land is funneled into the fund. Schools have become less reliant on this revenue over the past decade — timber sales alone accounted for 0.7% of total school construction expenditure in 2021, compared to 2% in 2012.

Revenue from timber is often generated in rural communities but spent on more urban areas.

Reykdal proposed the Washington Legislature use other sources of funding, including general obligation bonds or cash, to decouple trust lands from school construction.

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HEADLINE	07/21 Moving homeless into transitional housing
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article263679928.html
GIST	<p>Efforts to remove unhoused people from right of ways and into transitional housing are already seeing “early success” in Washington, Gov. Jay Inslee said Wednesday.</p> <p>“I am pleased to say that we are making some solid progress in this regard,” Inslee told reporters at a news conference at the Capitol in Olympia Wednesday afternoon. “That is in part because we’ve had really good cooperation from our local partners working on this.”</p> <p>Thurston County, particularly, is where the governor said state agencies have been most successful in removing encampments and finding those without housing “alternative places to be safe under a roof,” while also providing supportive services.</p> <p>The joint effort is between local governments, the Washington state Department of Transportation, the Department of Commerce and Washington State Patrol, according to Emily Glad, acting communications director for WSDOT.</p> <p>“Encampments along right(s) of way pose a clear safety risk to people living unsheltered, highway maintenance crews and the general traveling public,” Glad told McClatchy in an email. “We are working</p>

with our partners to ensure a compassionate, effective, sustainable response that focuses on helping people move to shelter and housing.”

In the first month, people from four encampments have been moved into safer housing options, Inslee noted.

Two of those homeless encampments were on Lilly Road in Olympia, one was located under the State Route 520 Portage Bay Bridge in Seattle and another was under I-5 at Olive Way in Seattle, Glad said.

“Fortunately we were successful in working with the legislature to come up with substantial appropriations to be able to afford to do this work,” Inslee said during the news conference. “This work is going to continue. I believe you will see some significant improvements on the I-5 corridor in the months to come.”

The governor first floated the idea of transitioning those without housing out of rights of way in his legislative priorities for 2022. A bill was requested by the governor’s office during the legislative session to establish an office within the Department of Health and Human Services to identify needs and help provide those types of services, but that proposed legislation did not pass.

Instead, a proviso was added to the budget passed this year to fund right of way removal and transitional housing. About \$8 million went to WSDOT, while the Department of Commerce, who is responsible for matching people with housing vacancies, received about \$45 million initially.

More than \$800 million was allocated from the legislature this year for homelessness programs, a record amount of money in the state for such programs.

Inslee told reporters Wednesday that the project is still under budget so far, and that recently the Department of Commerce came up with additional funding for the project.

In the coming months, the governor said state agencies will accelerate the project “as much as humanly possible.” Other housing alternatives such as tiny homes, hotels, and existing low-income housing all need to be freed up to make the project successful, he said.

While the governor recognized the need for mental health services as well, he said that “fundamentally we need more housing.” Restrictions such as zoning laws make it impossible to build enough housing, so the governor said he hopes the legislature will work to find a solution during the upcoming session.

Glad told McClatchy that “the primary consideration for timing when an encampment will be cleaned up is dependent on the availability of housing and shelter options.”

“Once housing and shelter is available, local partners need sufficient time to conduct outreach at an encampment and store belongings,” she said.

“Once these activities have occurred, and law enforcement is available to provide safety and security for people on site and work crews, WSDOT can cleanup an encampment.”

Discussions with partners in Spokane to remove a large encampment there also are underway, Inslee said.

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HEADLINE	07/21 Monkeypox virus entrenched as new STD?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/monkeypox-virus-could-become-entrenched-as-new-std-in-the-us/
GIST	NEW YORK (AP) — The spread of monkeypox in the U.S. could represent the dawn of a new sexually transmitted disease, though some health officials say the virus that causes pimple-like bumps might yet be contained before it gets firmly established.

Experts don't agree on the likely path of the disease, with some fearing that it is becoming so widespread that it is on the verge of becoming an entrenched STD — like gonorrhea, herpes and HIV.

But no one's really sure, and some say testing and vaccines can still stop the outbreak from taking root.

So far, more than 2,400 U.S. cases have been reported as part of an international outbreak that emerged two months ago.

Health officials are not sure how fast the virus has spread. They have only limited information about people who have been diagnosed, and they don't know how many infected people might be spreading it unknowingly.

They also don't know how well vaccines and treatments are working. One impediment: Federal health officials do not have the authority to collect and connect data on who has been infected and who has been vaccinated.

With such huge question marks, predictions about how big the U.S. outbreak will get this summer vary widely, from 13,000 to perhaps more than 10 times that number.

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said the government's response is growing stronger every day and vaccine supplies will soon surge.

"I think we still have an opportunity to contain this," Walensky told The Associated Press.

Monkeypox is endemic in parts of Africa, where people have been infected through bites from rodents or small animals. It does not usually spread easily among people.

But this year more than 15,000 cases have been reported in countries that historically don't see the disease. In the U.S. and Europe, the vast majority of infections have happened in men who have sex with men, though health officials have stressed that anyone can catch the virus.

It spreads mainly through skin-to-skin contact, but it can also be transmitted through linens used by someone with monkeypox. Although it's been moving through the population like a sexually transmitted disease, officials have been watching for other types of spread that could expand the outbreak.

Symptoms include fever, body aches, chills, fatigue and the bumps on parts of the body. The illness has been relatively mild in many men, and no one has died in the U.S. But people can be contagious for weeks, and the lesions can be extremely painful.

When monkeypox emerged, there was reason to believe that public health officials could control it.

The tell-tale bumps should have made infections easy to identify. And because the virus spreads through close personal contact, officials thought they could reliably trace its spread by interviewing infected people and asking who they had been intimate with.

It didn't turn out to be that easy.

With monkeypox so rare in the U.S., many infected men — and their doctors — may have attributed their rashes to some other cause.

Contact tracing was often stymied by infected men who said they did not know the names of all the people they had sex with. Some reported having multiple sexual interactions with strangers.

It didn't help that local health departments, already burdened with COVID-19 and scores of other diseases, now had to find the resources to do intensive contact-tracing work on monkeypox, too.

Indeed, some local health officials have given up expecting much from contact tracing.

There was another reason to be optimistic: The U.S. government already had a vaccine. The two-dose regimen called Jynneos was licensed in the U.S. in 2019 and recommended last year as a tool against monkeypox.

When the outbreak was first identified in May, U.S. officials had only about 2,000 doses available. The government distributed them but limited the shots to people who were identified through public health investigations as being recently exposed to the virus.

Late last month, as more doses became available, the CDC began recommending that shots be offered to those who realize on their own that they could have been infected.

Demand has exceeded supply, with clinics in some cities rapidly running out of vaccine doses and health officials across the country saying said they don't have enough.

That's changing, Walensky said. As of this week, the government has distributed more than 191,000 doses, and it has 160,000 more ready to send. As many as 780,000 doses will become available as early as next week.

Once current demand is satisfied, the government will look at expanding vaccination efforts.

The CDC believes that 1.5 million U.S. men are considered at high risk for the infection.

Testing has also expanded. More than 70,000 people can be tested each week, far more than current demand, Walensky said. The government has also embarked on a campaign to educate doctors and gay and bisexual men about the disease, she added.

Donal Bisanzio, a researcher at RTI International, believes U.S. health officials will be able to contain the outbreak before it becomes endemic.

But he also said that won't be the end of it. New bursts of cases will probably emerge as Americans become infected by people in other countries where monkeypox keeps circulating.

Walensky agrees that such a scenario is likely. "If it's not contained all over the world, we are always at risk of having flare-ups" from travelers, she said.

Shawn Kiernan, of the Fairfax County Health Department in Virginia, said there is reason to be tentatively optimistic because so far the outbreak is concentrated in one group of people — men who have sex with men.

Spread of the virus into heterosexual people would be a "tipping point" that may occur before it's widely recognized, said Kiernan, chief of the department's communicable disease section.

Spillover into heterosexuals is just a matter of time, said Dr. Edward Hook III, emeritus professor of infectious diseases at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

If monkeypox becomes an endemic sexually transmitted disease, it will be yet another challenge for health departments and doctors already struggling to keep up with existing STDs.

Such work has long been underfunded and understaffed, and a lot of it was simply put on hold during the pandemic. Kiernan said HIV and syphilis were prioritized, but work on common infections like chlamydia and gonorrhea amounted to "counting cases and that's about it."

For years, gonorrhea, chlamydia and syphilis cases have been rising.

	“By and large,” Hook said, doctors “do a crummy job of taking sexual histories, of inquiring about and acknowledging their patients are sexual beings.”
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HEADLINE	07/21 Lawsuit on FBI Covid testing policy tossed
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/07/21/judge-tosses-lawsuit-fbi-covid/
GIST	<p>A federal judge in Virginia on Thursday dismissed a lawsuit from a group of employees at the FBI and other national security and defense agencies who argued it was “unlawful and unconstitutional” to require unvaccinated staff get tested weekly for the coronavirus.</p> <p>U.S. District Judge Leonie M. Brinkema agreed with Justice Department lawyers that the federal employees who sued must instead pursue administrative grievances, through a process established by the Civil Service Reform Act.</p> <p>Employees and contractors at the CIA, in particular, were raising concerns about a “speculative situation,” the judge added, because the CIA never implemented a covid-screening policy it had in the works.</p> <p>Challenges to the Biden administration’s federal vaccine mandates have sprung up in courts across the country. Other federal courts have issued nationwide injunctions, or injunctions covering certain states, and the administration’s vaccine rules largely have been put on hold while the litigation continues.</p> <p>Experts said Brinkema’s ruling was significant because it covered coronavirus testing requirements, not vaccination mandates, for employees at the nation’s foremost law enforcement and national security agencies.</p> <p>“Who are more important agencies than the FBI and CIA?” said Peter Meyers, professor emeritus of law at George Washington University Law School and former director of the school’s Vaccine Injury Litigation Clinic, adding that he was not aware of any injunction covering testing mandates, though several courts have weighed in on vaccination mandates.</p> <p>Brinkema tossed the lawsuit on procedural grounds but also made comments from the bench addressing the merits of the case.</p> <p>“This is an effort by the agencies involved to keep the workforce safe,” Brinkema said.</p> <p>The Supreme Court previously ruled that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration could not impose a nationwide vaccine mandate covering all businesses with 100 employees or more. But the high court also has ruled that vaccine mandates could be imposed on hospitals and health-care facilities receiving funds from Medicaid or Medicare.</p> <p>Against that “confusing” backdrop, Meyers said, Brinkema’s ruling was “extremely important.”</p> <p>“Even though it’s not on the merits, it’s quite an important decision because it’s dealing with very important agencies, and individuals within those agencies challenging these vaccine and testing mandates, and the court is saying you cannot challenge these policies here,” Meyers said.</p> <p>Employees at the FBI, CIA, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense Education Activity — an agency that operates schools for the children of service members — sued in April, along with some CIA contractors. They were allowed to use “John Doe” and “Jane Doe” pseudonyms in court papers.</p> <p>The attorneys for the 25 plaintiffs argued “those who remain unvaccinated have been villainized” by the Biden administration since federal vaccine mandates began taking effect in 2021, and that scientific data showed “the unvaccinated are not the source of COVID-19 spread.”</p>

Brinkema said the Supreme Court repeatedly has recognized that the coronavirus pandemic poses a “serious health threat.” The judge referred to an “economic tailspin” and more than 1 million deaths so far in the United States.

She added that the vaccine “certainly decreases the risk of infection,” that getting tested once a week was a “de minimis intrusion,” and that none of the people suing “have had any employment action taken against them.”

Carol A. Thompson, an attorney for the plaintiffs, said after the hearing that the employees would seek to appeal Brinkema’s ruling to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit.

Spokespeople for the Justice Department declined to comment.

“The COVID-19 pandemic represents the most serious public health crisis in at least a century,” Justice Department lawyers said in a court filing last month, defending the federal law enforcement and national security agencies’ covid-mitigation policies. “More than 4.7 million Americans have been hospitalized, more than a million have died, and tens of thousands of new infections are being reported in the United States every day.”

The Justice Department lawyers added that, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, regularly testing unvaccinated people is a “key component to a layered approach to preventing the transmission” of covid-19.

In throwing out a similar lawsuit, a panel of judges on the 4th Circuit ruled in April that employees at the Defense Department and Food and Drug Administration challenging the Biden administration’s vaccine mandate had to file workplace grievances under the Civil Service Reform Act.

Brinkema said it was “very clear” that ruling also applied to the case she dismissed Thursday.

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HEADLINE	07/21 Australia restraint despite Covid surge
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/21/world/australia/australia-covid-restrictions.html?action=click&pgtype=Article&module=&state=default&region=footer&context=breakout link back to briefing
GIST	<p>With coronavirus cases surging, the authorities in Australia, which imposed some of the strictest Covid rules in the world in the early stages of the pandemic, are so far refraining from bringing back restrictions.</p> <p>Australia recorded 5,357 hospitalizations on Thursday, according to the federal health department, one of its highest figures since the pandemic began. Still, daily averages of new cases remain far below those seen during Australia’s biggest Covid wave in January, when hospitalizations reached a peak.</p> <p>Amid the new surge, health authorities and politicians are recommending that people wear masks indoors and are urging a return to working from home. Some government ministers have resumed wearing masks at news conferences. But the government hasn’t imposed new restrictions.</p> <p>When Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was asked why tougher measures were not being imposed, he said that people were flouting the few existing rules — including a requirement to wear masks while on public transit, which has been in place since the start of the pandemic.</p> <p>“Only about half the people are actually doing it,” Mr. Albanese told The Project news program on Wednesday. “Now, do you get on the trains and buses and arrest people or fine people for not doing it?” He also cited the toll that renewed restrictions could take on Australians’ mental health, particularly that of young people.</p>

“We’re seeing an increasing, really problematic increase, in incidents of severe consequences when it comes to young people’s health,” he said, without elaborating.

In Victoria State, where residents endured [262 total days of lockdown](#) in 2020 and 2021, the state health minister rejected a recommendation from another health official that mask mandates be broadened to include students, teachers and retail and hospitality staff. The health minister, Mary-Anne Thomas, [told local reporters](#) that a mandate was not the most effective way of promoting mask use.

The education department and school bodies in the state wrote to parents this week to say that children should wear masks in class, but the education minister [emphasized](#) that it was not a requirement.

Earlier in the pandemic, Australia’s strict border policies left tens of thousands of its [citizens stranded abroad](#), and people needed to be granted an exemption to leave the country. People were at times prevented from traveling between states and had to observe strict lockdown measures, like being allowed to leave home only to buy groceries, exercise outdoors for one hour a day or do authorized work.

Stephen Duckett, the former health director at the Grattan Institute, a research institute, said that the current reluctance to impose restrictions was the result of a shift in the politics surrounding pandemic restrictions.

This year, Australia took a sharp turn in its response and shifted to a policy of [living with the coronavirus](#). The former prime minister, Scott Morrison, and his conservative government promised that with most of the population vaccinated, it would roll back restrictions and let people make their own health decisions. Eighty-six percent of Australia’s population has received two doses of a coronavirus vaccine, according to [the Our World in Data project at the University of Oxford](#).

In May, Mr. Albanese took office, and his Labor party does not want to be seen as reneging on the previous government’s promise, Dr. Duckett said, with the reintroduction of even mild restrictions conflated by some Australians with a return to lockdowns.

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HEADLINE	07/21 Truckers protest, shutter Oakland port
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/21/truckers-shut-down-cargo-shipping-in-oakland-over/
GIST	<p>Independent truckers who began protesting a California gig economy law on Monday have blockaded the Port of Oakland, pledging to continue until Gov. Gavin Newsom meets with them about their concerns.</p> <p>Port officials announced that the truckers have “effectively shut down operations at shipping terminals at the Port of Oakland. The shutdown will further exacerbate the congestion of containers dwelling at the Oakland Seaport.”</p> <p>One shipping terminal, the Oakland International Container Terminal, shut down operations Wednesday due to the protests.</p> <p>The truckers take umbrage over Assembly Bill 5 (AB5), a 2019 law that makes it harder for employers to classify workers as independent contractors instead of employees. A federal judge ruled that the bill applies to 70,000 California owner-operator truckers.</p> <p>The protest stems from independent drivers being able to own their own truck and make their own hours. Owner-operator drivers make up the majority of truckers in California, and they do not want to become employees or join a union in order to work.</p> <p>AB Trucking owner Bill Aboudi is one of the protesting truckers.</p>

“It seems the governor is not concerned about taking American workers’ rights away. These are independent, small businesses that choose to operate their own trucks, and now that right is taken away from them,” Mr. Aboudi [told CNBC](#).

AB5 has not yet been implemented due to legal challenges, but enforcement can now begin because the U.S. Supreme Court has decided not to review the issue, [according to The Associated Press](#).

Dee Dee Myers, director of the Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development, said in an email to CNBC that “it’s time to move forward, comply with the law and work together to create a fairer and more sustainable industry for all.”

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HEADLINE	07/21 Phoenix-area: 500 homeless deaths 2022
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/21/homeless-deaths-phoenix-arizona-maricopa-county
GIST	<p>As many as 500 homeless people died in and around Phoenix, Arizona, during the first half of 2022, with almost 10% of deaths due to homicide, according to new figures from the county medical examiner’s office.</p> <p>The number of unsheltered people in Maricopa county, which includes the state capital Phoenix, has at least tripled since 2016.</p> <p>Drugs played a role in the majority of the deaths in which the medical examiner was able to determine the cause. In one case, a 26-year-old Black male partying with friends died after taking opiates, cocaine and benzodiazepines. In another case, a 32-year-old Indigenous woman died from a fentanyl overdose.</p> <p>African Americans and Indigenous people disproportionately experience homelessness in Maricopa county, and are overrepresented in the death toll.</p> <p>So far this year, paramedics and police have responded to about 800 suspected overdoses every month across the state, with synthetic opioids like fentanyl – which is 50 to 100 times more potent than heroin or morphine – involved in 96% of all drug deaths.</p> <p>The Department of Justice is investigating the police department over the excessive use of force, discriminatory policing and inappropriate treatment of homeless people among other allegations.</p> <p>Phoenix is the hottest city in the US and has the highest number of heat related deaths. Heat deaths are preventable, but being outside without adequate shade and water increases the risk of medical complications, toxic drug complications and deadly heat exposure.</p> <p>Last year unsheltered people accounted for 40% of the county’s 339 heat deaths, but advocates fear that this could rise significantly as this year there are far more people sleeping rough – in parks, near the rail tracks, on sidewalks, behind dumpsters, in parking lots and along the canals.</p> <p>Phoenix, one of the country’s fastest growing cities, has the highest rate of inflation (12.3%) of any large city in the US, with the cost of housing being a key driver. An investigation by the Guardian published in June found people from across the US living on the streets in Phoenix, with many unable to find affordable housing which is increasingly scarce.</p> <p>People experiencing homelessness have an average life expectancy of about 50 years of age, almost 20 years lower than housed populations, in large part due to a greater risk of infectious and chronic illness, poor mental health, and substance abuse, according to the CDC.</p> <p>At least 21 people experiencing homelessness die every day in the US, according to one observatory. Almost all are preventable.</p>

	<p>Stacey Champion, a local advocate for better heat and housing policies, described the death toll as crushing.</p> <p>“This is a public health crisis that’s going to continue to get worse as more people, especially seniors, are priced out of housing, as our fentanyl crisis grows more out of hand and until there’s a political sense of urgency to help those who are the most beat down by our broken systems,” she said.</p> <p>Nationwide, seniors are the fastest growing group in the homeless population, with many finding themselves on the streets for the first time due to unaffordable rents, medical debts, job insecurity and family rifts. More than 160 people who died between January and June were over 55 years old.</p> <p>Thirteen deaths were recorded as suicides . More than 30 people were hit and killed by cars including a 37-year-old woman who was struck while crossing the road by a vehicle who fled the scene.</p> <p>The January to June figures, which were first reported by Axios, include 338 deaths of confirmed transient or homeless people. This compares to 517 deaths for the whole of 2021 and 596 in 2022, according to the medical examiner’s annual reports.</p> <p>So far this year, another 159 deaths are recorded as unknown, which means the person may or may not have been homeless but will not be included in the examiner’s annual report.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Natural gas prices rising, fuels inflation
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/jul/21/natural-gas-prices-rising-us-inflation
GIST	<p>The price of natural gas in the US has risen by nearly half in the past month, as drought and the war in Ukraine continue to bite and millions of Americans turn up their air conditioners in a heatwave.</p> <p>Natural-gas futures jumped 48% this month, including 10% on Wednesday, to \$8.007 per million British thermal units (btu). The rise has come as other energy costs, including oil, have begun to drop from their June peaks.</p> <p>A ferocious continental heatwave is projected to last into August. On Wednesday Joe Biden announced a group of measures to tackle the climate emergency, though he held back from declaring a national climate emergency as some had hoped.</p> <p>The heat is also testing aging power grids, as consumers use high amounts of electricity. In Texas, a global hub for cryptocurrency mining, bitcoin miners shut off their machines amid warnings of rolling black-outs.</p> <p>The rising price of gas, along with coal, could dash hopes for an end to inflation any time soon. Some saw recent falling commodity prices as a signal that inflation, now running at 40-year high of 9.1%, could be close to peaking.</p> <p>But higher natural gas prices, the Wall Street Journal noted on Thursday, contribute to rising prices for the fertilizer, steel, cement, plastic and glass industries as well as the immediate costs in electricity production.</p> <p>Some US electricity utility companies have warned that summer prices could be 25% higher this year than last year. “The entire country is running their air conditioners,” Eli Rubin, senior analyst at the energy consultant EBW Analytics, told the Journal.</p> <p>Gas prices have surged also as a result of demand from overseas buyers, especially in Europe, where the war in Ukraine has threatened supplies from Russia.</p> <p>On Thursday, Gazprom resumed gas shipments through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline to Germany after a 10-day shutdown. Deliveries remain at just 40% of full capacity, however, raising the prospect of gas rationing over the coming winter.</p>

Europe uses less natural gas in the summer than the US does, as domestic air-conditioning is comparatively rare.

But the US heatwave has also upended natural gas price expectations in the US. After a liquefied natural gas (LNG) export plant Houston, Texas, was damaged by fire in June, traders anticipated that US gas prices would drop significantly – given that the gas could no longer be exported abroad and would have to be reserved for the domestic market.

Instead, extreme heat has caused gas prices to surge. Freeport LNG, the company that operates the terminal, has said it does not expect the plant to return to partial service until October.

Gas prices in Europe have now jumped around 40%. The disaster also upended the White House plan to export gas to Europe to offset the loss of Russian supplies.

Unlike Germany, US electricity producers cannot easily switch from gas to coal (which itself has risen in price by one-third in the past year), as a third of coal-burning plants have been retired since 2010.

Electricity producers are also contending with reduced hydropower owing to drought in the western US. The Energy Information Administration estimates that California hydroelectricity will be half its normal output this summer if the drought continues.

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HEADLINE	07/21 As prices surge, refineries raking in cash
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/refiners-rake-in-cash-after-gas-prices-surge-11658405412?mod=hp_list_a_pos1
GIST	<p>U.S. fuel makers are poised to generate historic levels of cash from refining oil into gasoline and other products after fuel prices have surged nationwide.</p> <p>Valero Energy Corp., Marathon Petroleum Corp. and Phillips 66, the largest three independent refiners, are set to collectively bring in about \$14 billion in cash from operations this quarter, analysts estimate, the highest combined level on record according to S&P Capital IQ data.</p> <p>The huge cash flows from their core business will translate into gargantuan profits as the companies report their results beginning next week, according to analysts. Investment bank Tudor Pickering Holt & Co. expects the largest eight independent refiners will report a 652% jump in earnings per share, on average, compared with the first quarter of the year, allowing some of these companies to log their highest returns in years.</p> <p>Exxon Mobil Corp. this month said its fuel-making profits could climb up to about \$4.4 billion in the second quarter, compared with an average of \$853 million in the same periods from 2017 to 2019. That was the largest single factor in the company's forecast that earnings could be as high as about \$18 billion, which would be its most lucrative quarter in at least 25 years, according to FactSet.</p> <p>"We're seeing margins twice as high as the golden age," said Charles Kemp, a vice president at energy consulting firm Baker & O'Brien Inc., referring to a period of record profit levels for refiners from 2004 to 2007. Refiners back then benefited from a supply gap that emerged in part because they had virtually stopped building refineries since the last significant, new U.S. refinery was constructed in the 1970s. But refiners' profit bonanza might have peaked already.</p> <p>Record-high \$5-a-gallon gasoline last month has weighed on U.S. demand during the nation's usually busy driving season. American drivers purchased almost 10% less of the fuel in the week ended July 9 and about 7.8% less in the week ended July 16, compared with the same weeks last year, according to preliminary data on same-store gasoline sales from energy-data provider OPIS, a part of Dow Jones & Co., publisher of The Wall Street Journal.</p>

This, coupled with refineries running full tilt, has led to an uptick in stocks of gasoline that could translate into shrinking margins for refiners.

“Things have really been coming down hard,” said Matthew Blair, an analyst at Tudor Pickering Holt. [A recession, now predicted by many economists](#), would hit fuel demand even harder. Futures prices for oil and gasoline are dropping on market fears of a looming economic slowdown.

Even when factoring in these new developments, refiners are still on track for a banner year, according to Mr. Blair.

One factor underpinning profits is that U.S. refineries [closed about 1 million barrels a day](#) of capacity during the pandemic, according to [JPMorgan Chase](#) & Co. This resulted in low inventory levels when fuel demand surged from pandemic lows as economies reopened, pushing margins higher.

Despite high crude-oil prices, some U.S. refineries are paying less than some foreign competitors for oil, one of their main inputs, which is cheaper in the U.S. than it is in Europe and other regions. U.S. crude was a little more than \$3 per barrel lower Tuesday than the global benchmark, Brent. They are also paying much less than their [European counterparts](#) for the natural gas and electricity they need to run their operations.

On the U.S. Gulf Coast, estimated refining margins climbed to about \$42 per barrel in the second quarter, nearly four-times higher than the average from 2017 to 2019. Excluding special items, that could lift profits for U.S. fuel makers three to four times higher than the same periods in those prepandemic years, according to RBN Refined Fuel Analytics.

Refining margins have only ever reached those heights during short-term, regional supply constraints, such as when hurricanes take multiple refineries offline, analysts said.

American fuel makers have also benefited from shipping fuel to Latin American countries and other regions where gasoline and diesel prices have been higher.

The soaring profits have also become a political liability. In June, President Biden [urged U.S. oil refiners to expand capacity](#) and accused the companies of profiteering.

John Auers, a refining-industry analyst at RBN, said refiners are concerned the Biden administration and U.S. lawmakers will take aim at the oil-refining industry again for reporting hefty profits at a time when high fuel prices are weighing on the economy ahead of midterm elections in November.

“It’s going to be a banner quarter,” Mr. Auers said. “Refiners, from a public-relations standpoint, are afraid of it.”

The American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers, the industry’s main lobbying group, earlier this month laid out the factors it says are responsible for climbing profits. The cost of crude oil is the No. 1 contributor to fuel manufacturing costs, it said, urging policy makers to “stop the anti-oil rhetoric that is discouraging public and investor confidence.”

Refiners are unlikely to heed Mr. Biden’s calls to expand capacity, analysts said. Many of the companies project that fuel demand will soon plateau in the U.S. and other parts of the world as some countries begin to transition to cleaner sources of energy and electric vehicles. A refinery can take 20 years to recoup the initial investment, making the current business case for a new plant dim.

It remains to be seen what refiners will do with their swelling cash flows. Clean-energy projects, such as those that focus on producing renewable diesel, could provide an avenue for investments, says Baker & O’Brien’s Mr. Kemp. He expects refiners will also return some of that money to shareholders and use it to fund expansion projects.

HEADLINE	07/21 Airlines making money, too much demand
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/american-airlines-turns-first-profit-since-pandemic-began-11658405169?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1
GIST	<p>Rising costs and airlines' operational stumbles are taking some of the shine off a summer marked by an insatiable appetite for travel.</p> <p>Airlines are once again making money as travel demand has largely recovered from the depths of the Covid-19 pandemic, however, higher fuel prices and growing costs of labor and other items are eating into their margins.</p> <p>Airlines have found that they can't sustain the higher levels of flying they had hoped to offer to capitalize on rising demand. Staffing shortfalls, training logjams and constraints at overwhelmed European airports in particular are stifling their resurgence and forcing them into more restraint.</p> <p>American Airlines Group Inc., United Airlines Holdings Inc. and Alaska Air Group Inc. said this week that their revenue during the second quarter was the highest ever for this time of year, as resurgent demand allowed them to charge high enough fares to cover higher costs. Fears of a recession might be mounting, but consumers still want to travel, airline executives said.</p> <p>"There are two macro demand trends, recession versus continuing Covid recovery, working at cross-purposes," United Chief Executive Scott Kirby said Thursday. "For now at least, the Covid-19 recovery trend is at least canceling out and arguably exceeding the economic headwinds."</p> <p>Still, airlines are reining in their schedules for at least the rest of this year—not because they can't fill their planes, but to avoid costly operational stumbles.</p> <p>Robert Isom, American's chief executive, said: "We've pulled out some additional flying, and that's flying that we would rather do."</p> <p>American said domestic leisure travel has surpassed 2019 levels and remains strong. But the airline said its third-quarter flying capacity will be 8% to 10% lower than in the same period in 2019 as the airline pulls back capacity the rest of this year to build additional buffer into its schedule.</p> <p>The weather in June was challenging, with significant issues on 27 of 30 days that overwhelmed the airline's efforts to ensure it would be resilient enough to handle challenges, Mr. Isom said. American canceled over 5% of mainline flights that month, according to FlightAware.</p> <p>"The month of June was really hard on the airline," Mr. Isom said. "I can't—nor can anyone else—do anything about 27 out of 30 days of really severe weather in a number of our hubs," he said.</p> <p>American posted a profit of \$476 million in the second quarter. United reported a \$329 million profit on Wednesday, and Delta Air Lines Inc. last week reported a \$735 million profit.</p> <p>Airline shares fell Thursday even as the broader market turned higher. United fell 9.7% to \$37.65 while American fell nearly 8% to \$14 as of midday. Alaska, which also reported earnings Thursday, fell 1.7%.</p> <p>United and Delta have also said they would cap growth in the coming months to run more reliably after a difficult period in May and June.</p> <p>Those pullbacks and efforts to avoid delays and cancellations add to the cost pressures airlines are facing. Delta said last week it expects to pay \$700 million in overtime and premium pay to help avert disruption, and United executives said Thursday that the airline will be overstaffed while it gives priority to reliability over growth.</p>

“There is weather, and people do call in sick, and sometimes the jet bridge breaks and the power goes out for 20 minutes and stuff happens. And the system just doesn’t have any buffer to deal with that,” Mr. Kirby said.

That could come to a head after Labor Day. Typically, that is when business travelers hit the road again after children go back to school and family vacations slow down. But corporate travel, while increasing, hasn’t returned to prepandemic levels. Andrew Nocella, United’s chief commercial officer, said Thursday that the rate of improvement has slowed in recent weeks.

Airlines might have more trouble passing their higher costs along to consumers if demand slows, said Eric Bernardini, leader of the aerospace, defense and aviation practice at AlixPartners, a consulting firm. “It’s another ballgame when you are in a recession and people are going to look at what’s left in their wallet,” he said.

This summer is the second in a row in which airlines have struggled to ramp their operations back up to match demand. In 2021, travelers returned before airlines could rebuild their ranks. Without enough slack in the system, summer storms and other routine problems became dayslong snafus with thousands of scrubbed flights.

Airlines had been hopeful that they had tackled those problems and were ready for an even busier summer this year. Signs began to emerge this spring that there would be [challenges once again](#). Carriers including [JetBlue Airways](#) Corp., [Spirit Airlines](#) Inc. and [Southwest Airlines](#) Co. cut back on flying pre-emptively.

Carriers needed to bring on thousands of workers to replenish their ranks after offering buyouts and early retirement packages to slash costs in 2020.

While their staffing levels are once again nearing prepandemic levels after a monthslong hiring spree, some airlines have said they are finding that is no longer enough as they work through big backlogs of training requirements and adjust to a workforce comprised of less experienced employees to get back up to full force.

Airlines have also said that air-traffic control is short staffed, leading to problems in highly trafficked corridors such as Florida and the New York area. The Federal Aviation Administration has said it is working with airlines to ease some disruptions, including increasing staffing at a key air-traffic control facility near Jacksonville. But the agency says those issues don’t account for the majority of recent flight problems.

Acute staffing shortages at major European hub airports have been a big source of the summer’s chaos. London’s Heathrow Airport last week said it would [cap the number of departing passengers](#) and asked airlines to stop selling new tickets from the airport for the summer season. Airlines have had to scramble to reschedule, refund or reroute passengers at a time when flights have been full.

“We found that request to be quite disappointing and frustrating on many levels,” said Nate Gatten, American’s chief government affairs officer, adding that the airline doesn’t expect similar caps at U.S. airports but could see additional problems in Europe.

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HEADLINE	07/21 Latest Covid surge: BA.5 subvariant
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/21/briefing/ba5-covid-surge-paxlovid.html
GIST	The Covid virus has a Darwinian quality. As variants emerge, they compete with one another to become dominant. The most contagious variants tend to win the competition because they can spread more quickly. It’s survival of the fittest.

That is why the virus has become more contagious over time. Today, the most contagious form of Covid yet — the BA.5 subvariant — is spreading around the globe. “It looks as if we are unable to control it,” Dr. Charles Chiu of the University of California, San Francisco, told The Times.

In the U.S., cases [have surged recently](#), as has the number of hospitalized patients with Covid (although some of them were admitted for other reasons and happened to test positive for the virus while in the hospital)...

At the same time, I know that many readers aren’t sure how much attention to pay to Covid anymore. Most Americans are vaccinated, and the vaccines provide excellent protection against serious illness in a vast majority of cases. [In a recent Times poll](#), fewer than 1 percent of Americans described Covid as the country’s most important problem.

“I’m actually pleased to see the pandemic is not top of mind,” Dr. Ashish Jha, President Biden’s Covid coordinator, told me. “It means we’re making progress. The last thing I want as the Covid response coordinator is for us to get back to the point where Covid dominates our lives in scary ways.”

Today’s newsletter offers a guide to thinking about BA.5, including what steps the U.S. can take to minimize its toll.

Powerful tools ...

Throughout the pandemic, people have often conflated two different concepts: [contagiousness and severity](#). The first involves how easily the virus spreads. The second involves how sick an average person tends to get once infected.

Both matter. A more contagious variant infects more people, increasing the *number* who get very sick even if the *percentage* of infected people who get very sick remains the same. A more severe variant, on the other hand, increases the percentage of cases that lead to bad outcomes.

But the two concepts are different. If the prospect of getting Covid hasn’t been dominating your life in recent months — because you’re boosted and not in a major risk group — a new variant doesn’t need to cause big changes to your behavior unless it’s more severe.

So far, evidence suggests that BA.5 does not cause more severe disease than other Omicron variants, as Chiu and other experts have said. Instead, the percentage of Covid cases leading to bad outcomes is declining.

Consider these comparisons: Covid cases have risen faster than hospitalizations (which, again, include many people with [mild Covid who are hospitalized for other reasons](#)). Hospitalizations, in turn, have risen faster than the number of Covid patients in the I.C.U. And deaths from Covid have barely risen.

One reason is the steady buildup of natural immunity, as more and more people have had the virus. Another factor is the availability of drugs like Evusheld (to help protect immunocompromised people before infection) and Paxlovid (to reduce severity in infected people). “We have the ability to protect ourselves,” Dr. Joseph Kanter, Louisiana’s medical director, [said](#).

Paxlovid isn’t perfect. Many people find that it leaves a nasty taste, and [rebound cases](#) — in which people get sick again after taking the drug — are fairly common. But those rebound cases tend to be mild. As Jha said: “When you have people getting Paxlovid, they’re not ending up in the hospital. We know that it’s working.”

What about long Covid? It remains something of a mystery, and many experts hope that scientific research can eventually clarify what it is and how many people have it. Vaccines do seem to reduce the chances of having long-term symptoms, Jha said, and those symptoms seem to clear up within a few months in an extremely high percentage of cases.

Still, if even 2 percent of infections led to long-term problems, that would represent millions of people around the world, which is why more research is important. Until then, long Covid will resemble many other daily risks: Some people will largely ignore it, while others will try to reduce the risk (by wearing a mask indoors, for instance). Both approaches seem reasonable.

... not always used

The U.S., like many other countries, already has most of the tools it needs to defang BA.5. Unfortunately, many people are not using those tools.

Only about half of American adults [have received a booster shot](#). Even fewer have received a second booster. (Anyone 50 and older is now eligible for one, and the Biden administration seems likely to expand eligibility soon.) Jha offers this rule of thumb: If you have not yet gotten a vaccine shot — of any kind — in 2022, consider getting one.

Many doctors, for their part, remain unaware of the evidence showing that Paxlovid and Evusheld make a difference. This slow adoption is typical for new drugs, but it's costly in the case of Covid.

The hardest decisions are probably for people who are up-to-date on their vaccine shots and ready to take Paxlovid if they get sick, but still at risk because they have an underlying vulnerability, such as old age, cardiac problems or ongoing cancer treatment. In these instances, the BA.5 surge may call for more mask-wearing, skipping some indoor events or postponing travel. Longer term, it's a reminder that medical research to find more effective vaccines and treatments continues to have the potential to save many lives.

The BA.5 surge is unlikely to lead to major new Covid rules, like mask mandates, even in most liberal cities that have previously been the fastest to adopt them. "You can't just kind of cry wolf all the time," Dr. Allison Arwady, Chicago's health commissioner, [told The Times](#). Most Americans are understandably tired of such mandates. It's not even clear [how well mandates have worked](#).

But Covid is still killing [an alarmingly high number of Americans](#). The onset of BA.5 can offer a reminder that there is a middle ground between allowing Covid to dominate daily life and pretending that the pandemic is over. "We should not let it disrupt our lives," Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top federal infectious disease official, said. "But we cannot deny that it is a reality that we need to deal with."

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HEADLINE	07/21 Covid wave: Europe counts, carries on
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/21/world/europe/covid-ba5-wave.html
GIST	<p>ROME — Customers in the Rome bookstore paid no attention to the circular stickers on the floor instructing them to stamp out Covid by maintaining "a distance of at least 1 meter."</p> <p>"These are things from the past," said Silvia Giuliano, 45, who wore no mask as she browsed paperbacks. She described the red signs, with their crossed-out spiky coronavirus spheres, as artifacts "like bricks of the Berlin Wall."</p> <p>All across Europe, faded stickers, signs and billboards stand as ghostly remnants of past struggles against Covid. But while the vestiges of the pandemic's deadliest days are everywhere, so is the virus.</p> <p>A common refrain heard throughout Europe is that everyone has Covid, as the BA.5 Omicron subvariant fuels an explosion of cases across the continent. Governments, however, are not cracking down, including in the previously strictest nations, in large part because they are not seeing a significant uptick in severe cases, nor crowded intensive care units, nor waves of death. And Europeans have clearly concluded they have to live with the virus.</p> <p>Seats bearing faded blue social-distancing signs urging Paris Metro riders to keep this spot free are almost always taken. Drove of unmasked Germans pass by tattered signs in stores and restaurants reading "Maskenpflicht" or mask requirement. In a construction-materials store north of Madrid, the cashier walks</p>

the aisles without a mask before sitting behind a window of Plexiglas. On a recent day in Caffè Sicilia in Noto, Sicily, the feet of three different people stood in a single “Keep Safe Distance” circle as they clamored over cannoli.

And many people are traveling again, both within Europe and from outside its borders, bringing much-needed tourist money to nations desperate to bolster their economies.

“This is the way it is,” said Andrea Crisanti, a professor of microbiology who served as a top consultant to Italian leaders during the coronavirus emergency. One silver lining, he said, was that summer infections would create more immunity for the traditionally more difficult winter months. But letting the virus circulate at such enormous levels, he said, also created a “moral duty” on the part of governments to protect the elderly and otherwise vulnerable who remained at risk of serious disease despite vaccination.

“We need to change our paradigm. I don’t think the measures aimed at reducing transmission have any future,” he said, listing reasons including social exhaustion with restrictions, greater acceptance of risk, and the biology of a virus had become so infectious that “there is nothing that can stop it.”

That seems the case everywhere in Europe, where officials take solace in the apparently low incidence of serious disease and death, even as some experts worry about the toll on the vulnerable, the possibility that routine infection could lead to long Covid and the increased potential for mutations leading to more dangerous versions of the virus.

The “element of randomness” that generated the new mutations was “concerning,” said Christophe Fraser, an epidemiologist at the University of Oxford. Across Britain, Covid cases have tripled or more since late May, according to a survey run by the country’s Office of National Statistics.

“Infections are showing no signs of decreasing, with rates approaching levels last seen in March this year at the peak of the Omicron BA.2 wave,” said Sarah Crofts, who heads the analytical team for the statistics office. Hospitalizations have more than quadrupled since May, according to government data. But deaths caused by the virus, while on the rise, were not approaching the levels recorded at the start of the year.

“Overall, from a public health perspective, we need to remain vigilant, but this isn’t a cause to reverse course,” said Neil Ferguson, an epidemiologist at Imperial College London.

Some shifts have taken place. In April, Europe’s drug regulator, the European Medicines Agency, gave advice that second booster shots would only be needed for those over 80, at least until there was “a resurgence of infections.” On July 11, it decided that moment had arrived, recommending second booster shots for everyone over 60 and all vulnerable people.

“This is how we protect ourselves, our loved ones and our vulnerable populations,” the European commissioner for health and food safety, Stella Kyriakides, said in a statement, adding: “There is no time to lose.”

Across Europe, the authorities are trying to strike a balance between reassurance and complacency. In Germany, the Robert Koch Institute, the federal organization responsible for tracking the virus, has said “there is no evidence” that the BA.5 iteration of the virus is more lethal, but the country’s health minister, Karl Lauterbach, has shared tweets posted by a hospital doctor in the German city of Darmstadt, saying that his clinic’s Covid ward was fully occupied with severely symptomatic patients.

Germany’s vaccine board has yet to update its advice on a fourth shot, which recommends a second booster only those over 70 and at-risk patients.

In France, where an average of 83,000 cases a day have been reported in the last week, about a third more than a month ago, the health minister, François Braun, has steered away from new restrictions. He told RTL radio last week that “we have decided to bet on the responsibility of the French,” as he recommended

wearing masks in crowded places and encouraged a second vaccine booster dose for the most vulnerable people.

He has seemed confident that France, where nearly 80 percent of people are fully vaccinated, and its hospitals, could weather the new wave of infections and has focused more on collecting data to track the virus. “Minimal but necessary measures” were the right approach, Mr. Braun recently told the law commission of France’s Parliament. Last week, a proposal to give the government continued powers to require proof of vaccination or of a negative coronavirus test when entering France failed to pass the Parliament.

In Spain, where the vaccination rate is above 85 percent and more than half the eligible population have received a booster, the pandemic has felt like an afterthought as Spaniards reverted to their usual beach holidays and eagerly welcomed tourists. Officials, encouraged by the low occupancy of intensive care wards, said monitoring the situation would suffice.

Not everyone was satisfied.

“We’ve forgotten practically everything,” said Rafael Vilasanjuan, director of Policy and Global Development at the Barcelona Institute for Global Health, a research body.

But other parts of Europe were even more hands-off. In the Czech Republic, where there are no restrictions at all, including in hospitals, the virus is running rampant and officials openly predict an increasing spike in cases.

“The current wave copies trends in other European countries that are a few weeks ahead of us and they have not seen any major impact on their health system,” said a deputy health minister, Josef Pavlovic.

Bars and restaurants and movie theaters were full in Denmark, where cases are up 11 percent in the last two weeks, including hundreds of people at a music festival this month. “The figures are positive — no more people are getting seriously ill from the new variant,” Soren Brostrom, the director general of the Danish Health Authority, said in a statement.

The Danish Health Authority expects a spread of infections in the fall and plans to offer booster shots then.

In Italy, the first Western country to face the full force of the virus, reports of new cases have climbed steadily since mid-June, although they fell in the past week. The average daily number of deaths more than doubled over the past month, but hospitals have not been overwhelmed. The health minister, Roberto Speranza, announced that the country would follow the European regulator’s recommendation to offer a second Covid-19 booster shot to everyone over 60 — not only those over 80 and vulnerable patients.

“In the present situation you need to implement an integrated policy to protect the vulnerable people who, in spite of the vaccination, still are a risk of developing severe, severe disease,” said Mr. Crisanti, the former consultant to Italian leaders on the virus, who lamented what he said was a still enormous number of deaths every day from an infectious disease.

He predicted that over time, as vulnerable older people died, deaths caused by the virus would fall and the virus would become increasingly endemic. He said the immune systems of people who age into the 70- to 90-year-old age bracket in the future would have memories of, and protection against, the virus.

At that point, the tattered signs of Europe’s struggle with Covid would truly belong to another era. In the meantime, though, another woman in the Roman bookstore, this one in an N95 mask, worried that the stickers under her feet would become relevant again.

“Reality,” she said, “goes faster than laws.”

HEADLINE	07/21 Recession alarm rings on Wall Street
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/21/business/yield-curve-inversion.html
GIST	<p>Wall Street's most talked about recession indicator is sounding its loudest alarm in two decades, intensifying concerns among investors that the U.S. economy is heading toward a slowdown.</p> <p>That indicator is called the yield curve, and it's a way of showing how interest rates on various U.S. government bonds compare, notably three-month bills, and two-year and 10-year Treasury notes.</p> <p>Usually, bond investors expect to be paid more for locking up their money for a long stretch, so interest rates on short-term bonds are lower than those on longer-term ones. Plotted out on a chart, the various yields for bonds create an upward sloping line — the curve.</p> <p>But every once in a while, short-term rates rise above long-term ones. That negative relationship contorts the curve into what's called an inversion, and signals that the normal situation in the world's biggest government bond market has been upended.</p> <p>An inversion has preceded every U.S. recession for the past half century, so it's seen as a harbinger of economic doom. And it's happening now.</p> <p>The yield curve has predictive power that other markets don't.</p> <p>On Wednesday, the yield on two-year Treasury notes stood at 3.23 percent, above the 3.03 percent yield on 10-year notes. A year ago, by comparison, two-year yields were over one percentage point lower than the 10-year yields.</p> <p>The Fed's mantra on inflation back then was that inflation would be transitory, meaning that the central bank did not see a need to rapidly raise interest rates. As a result, shorter-dated Treasury yields remained low.</p> <p>But over the past nine months, the Fed has become increasingly concerned that inflation isn't going to fade on its own and it has begun to tackle rapidly rising prices by raising interest rates quickly. By next week, when the Fed is expected to raise rates again, its policy rate will have jumped by about 2.5 percentage points from near zero in March, and that has pushed up yields on short-term Treasuries like the two-year note.</p> <p>Investors on the other hand, have become increasingly fearful that the central bank will go too far, slowing the economy to such an extent that it sets off a severe downturn. This worry is reflected in falling longer-dated Treasury yields like the 10-year, which tell us more about investors expectations for growth.</p> <p>Such nervousness is also reflected in other markets: Stocks in the United States have fallen close to 17 percent so far this year, as investors reassess companies' ability to withstand a slowdown in the economy; the price of copper, a global bellwether because of its use in an array consumer and industrial products, has fallen over 25 percent; and the U.S. dollar, a haven in periods of worry, is at its strongest in two decades.</p> <p>What sets the yield curve apart is its predictive power, and the recession signal it is sending right now is stronger than it has been since late 2000, when the bubble in technology stocks had begun to burst and a recession was just a few months away.</p> <p>That recession hit in March 2001 and lasted about eight months. By the time it started, the yield curve was already back to normal because policymakers had begun to lower interest rates to try to return the economy to health.</p> <p>The yield curve also foretold the global financial crisis that began in December 2007, initially inverting in late 2005 and staying that way until mid-2007.</p>

That track record is why investors across the financial markets have taken notice now that the yield curve has inverted again.

“The yield curve is not the gospel but I think to ignore it is at your own peril,” said Greg Peters, co-chief investment officer at asset manager PGIM Fixed Income.

But which part of the yield curve matters?

On Wall Street, the most commonly referenced part of the yield curve is the relationship between two-year and 10-year yields, but some economists prefer to focus on the relationship between the yield on three-month bills and 10-year notes instead.

That group includes one of the pioneers of research into the yield-curve’s predictive power.

Campbell Harvey, now an economics professor at Duke University, remembers being asked to develop a model that could forecast U.S. growth while he was a summer intern at the now-defunct Canadian mining company Falconbridge in 1982.

Mr. Harvey turned to the yield curve but the United States was already roughly a year into recession and he was soon laid off because of the economic climate.

It wasn’t until the mid 1980s, when he was a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Chicago, that he completed [his research](#) showing that an inversion of the three-month and 10-year yields preceded recessions that began in 1969, 1973, 1980 and 1981.

Mr. Harvey said he preferred to look at three-month yields because they are close to current conditions, while others have noted that they more directly capture investors’ expectations of immediate changes in Fed policy.

For most market watchers, the different ways to measure the yield curve all broadly point in the same direction, signaling slowing economic growth. They are “different flavors,” said Bill O’Donnell, an interest rate strategist at Citibank, “but they are all still ice cream.”

Three-month yields remain below 10-year yields. So by this measure, the yield curve hasn’t inverted, but the gap between them has been shrinking rapidly as concerns about a slowdown have escalated. By Wednesday, the difference between the two yields had fallen from over two percentage points in May to around 0.5 percentage points, the lowest it’s been since the pandemic-induced downturn in 2020.

The yield curve can’t tell us everything.

Some analysts and investors argue that the attention on the yield curve as a popular recession signal is overdone.

One common criticism is that the yield curve tells us little about when a recession will start, only that there probably will be one. The average time to a recession after two-year yields have risen above 10-year yields is 19 months, according to data from Deutsche Bank. But the range runs from six months to four years.

The economy and financial markets have also evolved since the 2008 financial crisis, when the model was last in vogue. The Fed’s balance sheet has ballooned as it has repeatedly bought Treasuries and mortgage bonds to help support financial markets, and some analysts argue that those purchases can distort the yield curve.

These are both points that Mr. Harvey accepts. The yield curve is a simple way to forecast the trajectory for U.S. growth and the potential for a recession. It has proved reliable but it is not perfect.

He suggests using it in conjunction with surveys of [economic expectations among chief financial officers](#), who typically pull back on corporate spending as they become more worried about the economy.

	<p>He also pointed to corporate borrowing costs as an indicator of the risk that investors perceive in lending to private companies. Those costs tend to rise as the economy slows. Both of these measures tell the same story right now: Risk is rising, and expectations for a slowdown are mounting.</p> <p>“If I was back in my summer internship, would I just look at the yield curve? No,” Mr. Harvey said. But that also doesn’t mean that it has stopped being a helpful indicator.</p> <p>“It’s more than helpful. It’s quite valuable,” Mr. Harvey said. “It is incumbent upon any company’s managers to take the yield curve as a negative signal and engage in risk management. And for people too. Now is not the time to max out your credit card on an expensive holiday.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Ukraine attacks 200 targets across region
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/21/world/ukraine-war-russia#ukraine-says-it-destroyed-6-russian-ammunition-dumps-and-struck-scores-of-other-targets-in-the-south
GIST	<p>Ukraine’s military said on Thursday that it had used attack helicopters and fighter jets to pound Russian ammunition dumps and other positions in the south of the country over the past 24 hours, as part of a counteroffensive to reclaim territory.</p> <p>In all, Ukraine conducted 10 airstrikes using helicopters and fighter jets in and around Kherson Province, which Russian forces seized in March. Across the region, they attacked more than 200 targets using long-range missiles and artillery, officials said.</p> <p>The military claimed to have blown up six ammunition depots, five troop strongholds and several command posts. There was no independent confirmation of the statement although some of the strikes were captured on video.</p> <p>The gathering scale of Ukraine’s attacks in the south is consistent with preparations for a ground offensive because they put pressure on Moscow’s military infrastructure and supply lines. The south is economically and strategically significant because it contains Ukraine’s agricultural heartland, and its vital ports and provides a land link between Crimea and Russia.</p> <p>In recent weeks, Ukraine has made use of long-range artillery supplied by Western countries including the United States to strike targets deeper behind the front lines. The weapons are helping to counter Russia’s military might but Ukraine is far from having the scale of forces Russia can wield.</p> <p>The Kremlin, in the latest in a series of ever-shifting statements about its war aims, said this week that it had expanded its territorial ambitions to include a vast stretch of land in the Kherson and Zaporizka Provinces.</p> <p>While Ukrainian officials have warned for months that Moscow is making plans to annex those territories, the Russian foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, said on Wednesday that Russia’s ambitions in Ukraine now stretched beyond the country’s eastern territories, a departure from the Kremlin’s earlier claims that it is not waging a war of imperial expansion.</p> <p>As Russia laid bare its more ambitious military goals, the Pentagon said on Wednesday that it would send Ukraine four more advanced multiple-rocket launch vehicles, known as HIMARS. A senior defense official acknowledged that they were also considering sending Ukraine new fighter jets.</p> <p>Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., the chief of staff of the United States Air Force, declined to say what type of aircraft might be transferred, but he said that discussions were being held about how to reinforce Ukraine’s air force.</p> <p>“It’ll be something non-Russian, I can probably tell you that,” General Brown said at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado. “But I can’t tell you exactly what it’s going to be.”</p>

	<p>At that same forum, William J. Burns, the C.I.A. director, said that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia had made a fundamental miscalculation.</p> <p>“He insists that Ukraine is not a real country, but real countries fight back,” Mr. Burns said. He added the Russian leader believed that America has a short attention span and that with time, Western resolve will fade.</p> <p>In recent weeks, Ukrainian partisans operating behind enemy lines in the occupied territory of the south have stepped up their campaign against Russian occupation forces, undermining Moscow’s effort to annex territory.</p> <p>The resistance is also expected to play a role as the Ukrainian military moves to recapture lost lands. Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said on Wednesday that there was “significant resistance behind Russian lines.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 India next president will make history
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/21/world/asia/india-president.html
GIST	<p>UPARBEDA, India — Many people in the remote eastern village of Uparbeda still cook over firewood. Water is drawn from community hand pumps. And electricity had yet to reach Churamuni Tudu’s home — until last month.</p> <p>That was when her sister-in-law, Droupadi Murmu, suddenly became the likely next president of India. Soon, news outlets reported that some people in this village, where Ms. Murmu grew up, were still living without electricity. And soon after that, workers were sent to connect Ms. Tudu and other residents to the grid.</p> <p>“Now I don’t have to walk half an hour to an acquaintance’s to charge my mobile,” said Ms. Tudu, who posed for a photo by the newly installed meter on the wall of her veranda. “My grandchildren can read in the evening time when they come to visit me.”</p> <p>India’s presidency is largely ceremonial. But when Ms. Murmu, who on Thursday was declared to have been elected to the post by lawmakers, is sworn in next week, it will have significance well beyond Uparbeda.</p> <p>Besides being only the second female president of India, Ms. Murmu, who until recently was the governor of Jharkhand State, will be the first from the country’s Indigenous tribal communities, an economically marginalized population that makes up nearly 10 percent of India’s population.</p> <p>Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s governing Bharatiya Janata Party, or B.J.P., which along with its allies nominated Ms. Murmu for the presidency last month, says her new prominence will bring attention to the needs of India’s hundreds of officially recognized tribes, many of whose members live in remote, impoverished villages like Uparbeda.</p> <p>“Since independence, no one from this diverse tribal community had found representation at this level,” said Samir Mohanty, the B.J.P.’s president for Odisha State, which includes Uparbeda.</p> <p>Others see the party’s choice of Ms. Murmu as a calculated play for votes. The B.J.P., a Hindu nationalist party, has been trying for years to make inroads with tribal voters in states like Odisha, where they make up nearly a quarter of the population.</p> <p>“For the last eight to 10 years, the new packaging of the B.J.P. has been going on, that it is a party of the lower castes, the marginalized and the tribals, an idea they want to promote,” said Harish Wankhede, a professor of political studies at Jawahar Lal Nehru University in Delhi who specializes in identity politics.</p>

Ms. Murmu, 64, is a member of one of India's oldest and largest tribes, the Santhals, who are famous for [an uprising against British rule](#) in the 1850s. She was born to a rice farmer who was a member of Uparbeda's village council; as a child, she walked a kilometer to school each day and studied at night by kerosene lamp.

She started out as a teacher and soon went into local politics, joining the B.J.P. and eventually serving in Odisha's state legislature. In 2015, the party nominated her for governorship of Jharkhand, a neighboring state that also has a substantial tribal population. She held the office until last year.

Ms. Murmu has a reputation for being soft-spoken and unassuming. She [told an interviewer in 2016](#) that she had not originally intended to seek public office.

"At the time, politics was not looked at with a good point of view," she said. "Especially for women. Because the society I belong to, they think that women should not step into politics."

As India's 15th president, Ms. Murmu will essentially be a figurehead. India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, once said the presidency was designed to carry "[great authority and dignity](#)" but no "real power." But over the years, presidents have used their influence to [resolve various political crises](#) and have [criticized governments](#) over policies they disapproved of.

For the B.J.P., political analysts say, giving Ms. Murmu the presidency is a way to increase its appeal to women as well as send the broader message that it cares about the disadvantaged. But they say it is also part of an effort to [make gains in states with large tribal populations](#). Voters from India's tribes and its lower castes have tended to support the Congress party, which is now in the opposition, or regional parties with strong local leaders.

Salkhan Murmu, a former B.J.P. lawmaker and a community activist, said the rise of Ms. Murmu was a "huge, huge deal" for Santhals and other tribes. Mr. Murmu, who is not related to the incoming president, has been [lobbying for tribal religious practices](#) to be formally recognized in India's census.

"B.J.P. wants to extend its political base, and we want recognition of our culture and tradition," he said. "Let them win politically, and let us win culturally and traditionally, so that we can keep our distinct languages and way of life alive."

The drive to Uparbeda from Odisha's capital, Bhubaneswar, takes close to eight hours, meandering through lush green forests, farmlands and forest reserves, even onto designated paths for elephants. Finally it opens onto a picturesque landscape of paddy fields, with mountains looming in the background.

Miles ahead of the village, people enthusiastically pointed the way to it. Ms. Murmu's nomination was major news in the area. In Uparbeda, villagers formed a circle around trees they considered sacred and prayed for her victory.

"We are getting ready to dance to the tune of the drums," Bhakta Bandhu Tudu, a cousin of Ms. Murmu's, said by telephone on Thursday before the lawmakers' votes were counted.

On a recent afternoon, Uparbeda men were hunched in ankle-deep water, tending to their paddy fields. Women rode bicycles to the local market. The village, whose population is about 1,600, has three schools and a primary health care center. For more serious ailments, people travel to the nearest town, 12 miles away.

Ms. Tudu, a widow whose husband was Ms. Murmu's brother, grows rice in a small field and draws her water from the community pump. She said it was "liberating" to have electricity in her home, though some of the rooms had yet to be connected.

	<p>Ms. Tudu was thrilled by her sister-in-law's ascent. "It fills my heart with joy," she said. A cousin sitting nearby, Heera Murmu, was more pragmatic.</p> <p>"Our wish list includes clean tap water, a hospital and a better school for the children from our new president," she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Belgium ratifies Iran prisoner exchange
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/21/world/europe/belgium-iran-prisoner-exchange-treaty.html
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS — After two days of contentious debate, Belgium's Parliament has approved a much-criticized treaty with Iran that would allow prisoner exchanges between the two countries.</p> <p>Critics of the treaty, which was ratified late Wednesday by a vote of 79 to 41, with 11 abstentions, argue that Belgium is giving in to a form of hostage-taking by Iran.</p> <p>In late February, the Iranian authorities detained a Belgian aid worker, Olivier Vandecasteele, 41, on charges of espionage. His arrest was not made public, but on March 11, Belgium signed the prisoner-exchange treaty with Iran that was ratified on Wednesday.</p> <p>Mr. Vandecasteele worked in Iran for several nongovernmental aid organizations for five years, but left in March 2021 after losing his job. He returned in February to pick up his personal belongings, but was arrested and imprisoned on the espionage charges, which the Belgian government said were baseless.</p> <p>The detention of Mr. Vandecasteele was revealed by his family only this month.</p> <p>Belgium's justice minister, Vincent Van Quickenborne, defended the treaty to legislators. "Iran is a rogue state, but we don't choose whom we talk to," he said, emphasizing that freeing Mr. Vandecasteele was "our priority."</p> <p>But opposition legislators, led by the New Flemish Alliance, a right-wing nationalist party, said the government was giving in to blackmail from Tehran and putting more Belgians at risk.</p> <p>Prime Minister Alexander De Croo insisted that the treaty was the only way to secure the release of Mr. Vandecasteele. "Belgium does not abandon its citizens," he said in Parliament. "What do you tell his family, that we are going to let him rot in his cell?"</p> <p>Iran, critics said, was pushing to secure the return of an Iranian diplomat convicted last year in Belgium to 20 years in prison for orchestrating a plot to bomb a 2018 meeting of Iranian opposition leaders in France. If the diplomat is allowed to return to Iran, he is likely to be immediately released rather than serving out his sentence there, the critics said.</p> <p>The diplomat, Assadollah Assadi, 50, was found guilty in February 2021 of organizing the plot and providing explosives to a Belgian-Iranian couple to target the annual gathering of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, which normally features prominent foreign supporters like the former F.B.I. chief Louis J. Freeh and Rudolph W. Giuliani, the former New York mayor.</p> <p>Mr. Assadi, the Belgian court ruled, was working for Iranian intelligence under his diplomatic cover from Iran's Embassy in Austria and so had no immunity in Belgium.</p> <p>Iran has demanded his release, and even Mr. Van Quickenborne said to Parliament that after Mr. Assadi's arrest, Belgium and its 200 citizens in Iran had become targets. "From Day 1, we have felt pressure from Iran, and the security situation of our interests has deteriorated systematically," he said. But he denied any direct link between the treaty and the Assadi case.</p>

	<p>In a statement on Thursday, the National Council of Resistance of Iran, which had lobbied hard against the treaty, condemned its ratification as “shameful.” Belgium’s vote, it said, would provide “the highest incentive for the religious fascism ruling Iran to step up terrorism and to use hostage-taking as much as possible for the release of its arrested terrorists and agents.”</p> <p>The council is the political wing of the Mujahedeen Khalq, which seeks to overthrow the Islamic government of Iran.</p> <p>The treaty would permit Iranians convicted in Belgium to serve their sentences in Iran, and Belgians convicted in Iran to serve their sentences in Belgium. But the treaty also allows each party to grant amnesty, and critics say that there is little doubt that Mr. Assadi would be set free.</p> <p>Mr. Assadi, prosecutors said at his trial, brought about a pound of the explosive triacetone triperoxide and a detonator to Vienna from Iran in his luggage and then drove it to Luxembourg. There, he handed it over on June 30, 2018, to the Iranian-Belgian couple at a Pizza Hut. Mr. Assadi was arrested at a service station in Germany, where he did not have diplomatic immunity, as he drove back to Austria.</p> <p>The couple had been granted political asylum and later citizenship in Belgium. They were arrested as they drove to Paris from Antwerp on the day of the rally. A fourth defendant was an associate of Mr. Assadi’s who was supposed to guide the couple at the rally.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Coronavirus risk rising in much of the US
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/21/world/covid-risk-us.html
GIST	<p>In just eight weeks, the Omicron subvariant known as BA.5 has gone from a blip in United States case counts to the dominant version of the coronavirus in the country, now making up more than three-quarters of new cases. Perhaps the most transmissible subvariant yet, BA.5 is driving increases in positive tests, hospitalizations and intensive care admissions across the country.</p> <p>As of Wednesday, an average of roughly 127,700 known coronavirus cases and 426 deaths were being reported each day in the United States, according to a New York Times database, a marked increase from early July.</p> <p>Known infections are rising in at least 40 states, particularly in the Great Plains, West and South. Hospitalizations have increased by 19 percent over the past two weeks, and more than 41,800 people are now in American hospitals with the coronavirus on an average day.</p> <p>The popularity of home testing means that figures for reported cases are now even more of an undercount of the true infection rate than they were in the pandemic’s earlier waves. The share of all tests that come back positive is also rising faster. Federal data show that the risk of catching the virus is increasing in much of the country.</p> <p>The C.D.C.’s assessment last week of community risk levels, using a hospitalization-based metric, puts about 35 percent of United States counties in the “high risk” category, but those counties are home to about 55 percent of the American population.</p> <p>In such high-risk areas, the agency recommends wearing masks in public indoor settings. But there are no state-level mask mandates now in force.</p> <p>President Biden’s coronavirus response team warned Americans last week that they must do more to protect themselves against Covid-19.</p> <p>“Variants will continue to emerge if the virus circulates globally and in this country,” Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, Mr. Biden’s chief medical adviser for the pandemic, said at a White House news briefing. “We should not let it disrupt our lives. But we cannot deny that it is a reality that we need to deal with.”</p>

	<p>Still, many Americans have turned their attention away from the pandemic, and many health officials have grown more hesitant to sound the alarm.</p> <p>The rapid evolution of the coronavirus into an alphabet soup of subvariants helped push the Food and Drug Administration to advise vaccine makers to update their coronavirus vaccines for a booster campaign in the fall. The updates would be intended to make the vaccines more effective against the highly contagious Omicron subvariants that are causing the current surge.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Covid risks concentrated among elderly
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/21/health/covid-risk-biden-older-adults-boosters.html?action=click&pgtype=Article&module=&state=default&region=footer&context=breakout link back to briefing
GIST	<p>President Biden is 79, and Americans his age and older have made up larger and larger shares of those dying from Covid in recent months. The virus has taken advantage of falling immunity caused by long delays since older people's last vaccinations, and the Omicron variant has evolved a growing ability to skirt the body's defenses.</p> <p>Covid has been killing substantially fewer Americans of all ages this summer than it did during the peak of the wintertime Omicron wave. Still, older people remain at significantly higher risk.</p> <p>As of early June, four times as many Americans aged 75 to 84 were dying each week from the virus, compared with people two decades younger, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (Those death counts are provisional, the C.D.C. cautioned, because they were based on death certificates and did not account for all deaths in those age groups.)</p> <p>That is an even bigger age gap than existed at the peak of the Omicron wave this winter. Then, the number of people aged 75 to 84 killed by Covid each week was twice as high as the number aged 55 to 64.</p> <p>The president received a second booster shot in late March, significantly reducing his risk of severe illness. This spring, people aged 50 and older who had received a single booster were dying from Covid at four times the rate of those with two booster doses, the C.D.C. has reported.</p> <p>In 2022, Covid deaths, though always concentrated in older people, have skewed toward older people more than they did at any point since vaccines became widely available. Many older people were vaccinated early in 2021, and among those who have not yet received a booster shot, immune defenses generated by the shots have significantly waned.</p> <p>In contrast, middle-aged Americans, who suffered a large share of pandemic deaths last summer and fall, are benefiting from greater stores of immune protection from both vaccination and prior infections.</p> <p>While Covid deaths remain far lower than in the winter, they are climbing again among older people as the immune-evasive Omicron subvariant known as BA.5 causes more infections, according to the latest C.D.C. data. From early May to early June, the number of Americans aged 75 to 84 dying from Covid each week increased by nearly 50 percent.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Despite 2nd booster, Biden contracts Covid
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/21/health/biden-covid-boosters.html?action=click&pgtype=Article&module=&state=default&region=footer&context=breakout link back to briefing
GIST	President Biden's coronavirus infection is a stark illustration that the Covid vaccines, powerful as they are, are far from the bulletproof shields that scientists once hoped for.

Mr. Biden has received multiple doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine; [his most recent shot, a second booster](#), was on March 30. Studies suggest that those doses will provide a powerful bulwark against severe illness — and indeed, the president has only mild symptoms so far after testing positive on Thursday, according to the White House.

But even booster doses offer little defense against infection, particularly with the most recent versions of the virus. What little protection they do offer wanes sharply and quickly, several [studies](#) have shown. In the president's case, the booster shot he received nearly four months ago is likely to have lost most of its potency at preventing infection.

Earlier in the pandemic, experts believed that the vaccines would be enough to forestall not just severe disease, but also the vast majority of infections. And that was true when earlier versions of the virus, including the Delta variant, swept the globe.

But the Omicron variant upended those hopes. As more of the population gained some immunity, whether from infection or vaccines, the virus evolved to dodge those defenses. BA.1, the subvariant of Omicron that circulated over the winter, was adept at causing infections even in those who had received a booster dose of vaccine just weeks earlier.

Each subsequent avatar of the virus has become still better at sidestepping immunity. BA.5, which now accounts for nearly 80 percent of cases in the United States, is the most wily yet. Detailed data collected in Qatar suggests that immunity from previous infection and vaccines is [weakest against BA.5](#) compared with its predecessors.

BA.5 is also highly contagious. The nation is recording roughly 130,000 cases per day on average; that number is likely to be a huge underestimate, because most people test at home or do not test at all. The number of hospitalizations has also spiked over the past few weeks, although BA.5 does not appear to cause more severe disease than other forms of Omicron.

Given how much the virus has changed, the administration has been debating the value of authorizing additional shots of the original vaccine in the fall, and [offering second boosters](#) to adults younger than age 50. An advisory panel of the Food and Drug Administration [said last month](#) that the vaccine manufacturers should make shots tailored to the newest variants.

But it's unclear whether those shots will arrive in time to forestall a fall surge, and whether the virus will have once again evolved beyond their reach.

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HEADLINE	07/22 China economy suffers rapid slowdown
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/world/chinas-economy-suffering-rapid-slowdown-systemic-problems-surface
GIST	<p>China's economic rebound may face a greater uphill battle than Beijing would otherwise like the world to believe thanks to pressure within the real estate sector and "frustrations" in the banking industry.</p> <p>"China's economy has been slowing for quite some time," Craig Singleton, a fellow at the nonpartisan Foundation for Defense of Democracies, told Fox News Digital. "What we're witnessing now is a rapid economic slowdown."</p> <p>Economists can't seem to make heads or tails of China's current economic situation: GDP data indicated a sharp slowdown in Q2, but just weeks ago the Hang Seng hit a 3-month high in what some analysts hailed as signs of recovery.</p> <p>Larry Hu, the chief Chinese economist at Macquarie in Australia, told Fortune that the economy "is on the mend, but it remains very weak." He attributed the struggles to the impact of extended lockdowns during the pandemic, and China's zero-covid policy has only further complicated the issue.</p>

The policy requires localized lockdowns with the [detection of any COVID-19](#) infections, which has led to the prolonged lockdown of major ports and economic centers. Shanghai shut down for 60 days in Spring 2022, measuring a peak of 26,000 cases per day in April. Post-lockdown, officials reported only 29 cases on June 1.

Singleton argues that while COVID has played a part in the initial troubles, China's recovery slowdown has resulted from "deeper structural, systemic problems."

"One of them happens to be ... China's hyper leveraged property market by some conservative estimates," he explained. "China's property sector makes up 30% of Chinese GDP, so even small deviations in that market can have outsized impact on China's broader global domestic product and its broader growth."

Homebuyers across China have [threatened to stop making mortgage payments](#), blaming "stalled" building work, which has added a serious wrinkle against any recovery Beijing has recorded.

"We've seen a number of very large defaults of some of the largest Chinese property construction companies," Singleton said. "We've seen an increasing amount of frustration from Chinese citizens who have sunk their life savings into China's real estate market, primarily viewing it as an investment vehicle or a safe investment, and now many of them are left unable to move into their homes."

The China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission (CBIRC) insisted that the banks should meet "reasonable" developer financing needs and that "all the difficulties and problems will be properly solved," Reuters reported. Data for the property sector showed a 7% shrink in the second quarter compared to the previous year.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang spoke with 100,000 officials to lay out a 33-point plan that included a \$120 billion credit line for infrastructure projects. The [World Bank voiced concern](#) that Beijing would turn to "the old playbook of boosting growth through debt-financed infrastructure and real estate investment."

"Such a growth model is ultimately unsustainable, and the indebtedness of many corporates and local governments is already too high," the World Bank wrote, instead supporting consumer-based incentives.

That economic weakness creates a troubling picture for Chinese President Xi Jinping as he seeks another, record third term as leader, according to Asia expert and Gatestone Institute senior fellow Gordon Chang. Xi might try to shake things up in order to show that China remains strong internationally even as it faces these domestic troubles.

"Xi Jinping has every incentive in the world to cause some military misadventure abroad," Chang said, saying Xi could "either invade a neighbor or perhaps dangerously intercept a plane or a vessel."

"We don't know exactly what he would do, but he does have reason to do it," Chang added. "Right now, China is in distress: [Xi]'s got the mortgage boycott, which is now in 86 cities; a new supplier's boycott; bank runs - this is just unprecedented."

Chang suggested Xi might try to even stir up trouble with India, a neighbor that China has clashed with a number of times over recent years. He also pointed to recent Chinese incursions into Japanese waters, as well as renewed pressure in the South China Sea, which prompted a warning from the U.S. State Department.

"We know that these are not only simmering incidents, but some of them could actually make sure to a full-blown crisis," he said.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies wrote that Zero-Covid has "exact[ed] high economic, social and political costs in a remarkably short period." [Analysts at the Center](#) believe that the policy has "disrupted manufacturing, supply chains and consumer spending."

	<p>Singleton noted that this has led to record-high urban youth unemployment and "broad-based" frustration in the banking sector. About one-fifth of all 16 to 24-year-olds in China are currently unemployed, meaning less than 15% of recent graduates have managed to find jobs.</p> <p>"There's every indication that China will fall far short of meeting its annual economic growth target of 5.5%," Singleton argued. "What we are starting to realize very quickly, I think, is that, you know, the days of China's meteoric economic, economic rise are long past."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Deadly police raid Rio favela stirs violence
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/deadly-raid-rio-favela-sparks-police-violence-complaints-87225804
GIST	<p>RIO DE JANEIRO -- A raid of Rio de Janeiro's largest complex of favelas that left at least 18 people dead has sparked renewed complaints of excessive police violence and ignited debate over how to handle crime ahead of state and presidential elections.</p> <p>Rio authorities said 16 suspected criminals were killed in confrontations with police in Complexo do Alemão favela, or low-income community, along with a police officer and an woman. The raid targeted a criminal group that stole cars and robbed banks, and invaded nearby neighborhoods.</p> <p>Videos circulating on social media showed intense shootouts between criminals as well as a police helicopter flying low over the small, brick houses. Rio's police have used helicopters to shoot at targets, even in densely populated residential areas, and video showed shots being fired from the favela at the aircraft.</p> <p>At the site of the raid, Associated Press reporters saw residents carrying about 10 bodies as bystanders shouted, "We want peace!"</p> <p>"It's a massacre inside, which police are calling an operation," one woman told AP, speaking on the condition of anonymity because she feared reprisals from authorities. "They're not letting us help (victims)," she added, saying she saw one man arrested for attempting to do so.</p> <p>Ronaldo Oliveira, an investigator with Rio's police force, said officials would have rather just made arrests of suspects "but unfortunately they chose to fire at our policemen."</p> <p>Rio state Gov. Cláudio Castro, who is running for reelection in October, said on Twitter he lamented the police officer's death.</p> <p>"I will continue to fight crime with all my strength. We will not back down from the mission of guaranteeing peace and security to the people of our state," Castro said.</p> <p>In another tweet, Castro said his main rival in the elections, leftist Marcelo Freixo, defends criminals who attack police, "such an important institution that makes us so proud." Freixo responded that the governor "uses police to make politics."</p> <p>The government's strategy for tackling violence and organized crime, an approach that regularly sees deadly police operations, has come under criticism. A raid in Rio's Vila Cruzeiro favela in May killed more than 20 people.</p> <p>Brazil will also hold presidential elections in October with security a key issue and President Jair Bolsonaro touting a tough-on-crime approach.</p> <p>"ENOUGH of this genocidal policy, governor!" Talíria Petrone, a federal lawmaker for Rio, said in response to the governor's tweet. "This failed public security policy leaves residents and police on the ground, en masse. It's no longer possible to keep piling up Black bodies and favela residents every day!"</p>

Robert Muggah, co-founder of Igarapé Institute, a Rio de Janeiro-based think tank focused on security, said Thursday's raid is "a symptom of failed leadership and an institutional culture that condones excessive force."

"The killings resulting from large scale police operations is a grim reminder that militarized policing is not only ineffective, it is counterproductive," Muggah said in a text message, adding those raids generate "extreme violence predominantly affecting low-income Black populations while also corroding the trust between residents and law enforcement."

Alemao is a complex of 13 favelas in northern Rio, home to about 70,000 people. Nearly three-quarters of them are Black or biracial, according to a July 2020 study published by the Brazilian Institute of Social and Economical Analyses.

Earlier this year, Brazil's Supreme Court established a series of conditions for police to conduct raids in Rio's favelas as a means to reduce police killings and human rights violations. The court ordered that lethal force be used only in situations in which all other means have been exhausted and when necessary to protect life.

The ruling came in response to a raid on the Jacarezinho favela in 2021 that resulted in 28 people being killed. As was the case Thursday, an officer died during that raid, which some speculated at the time was the cause for subsequent abuse and summary executions.

Thursday's operation began before dawn and finished around 4 p.m. local time, police said. Nearly 400 police officers were involved, including Rio's tactical police unit, according to the police statement.

In a video shared by Voz da Comunidade, a community news outlet focused on Rio's favelas, residents can be seen calling for peace and waving white cloths from their windows and rooftops.

Fabício Oliveira, one of the coordinators of the police raid, said authorities fear that Friday could be another violent day at the Complexo do Alemao.

"Our experience has told us that after raids like these police are attacked in every way," Oliveira said.

Human rights group Amnesty International said on Twitter that prosecutors must immediately investigate policemen involved in Thursday's raid.

"WHO WILL STOP Gov. Cláudio Castro and his disastrous and rights violating public security policies in Rio de Janeiro," the non-profit said. "Enough of so much brutality! THE FAVELA WANTS TO LIVE!"

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HEADLINE	07/22 Japan: growing threats from Russia, China
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/japan-warns-rising-global-tension-russia-china-arms-87233505
GIST	<p>TOKYO -- Japan warned of escalating national security threats stemming from Russia's war on Ukraine and China's tensions with Taiwan in an annual defense paper issued Friday, as Japan tries to bolster its military capability and spending.</p> <p>The annual defense white paper, approved by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's Cabinet on Friday, highlights the need for Japan's military buildup to address security concerns and seeks to gain public support for a stronger military and increased budget, which Kishida's governing party aims to double in coming years.</p>

The report comes months ahead of a revision to Japan's national security strategy that is expected to include a pre-emptive strike capability, which critics say would go beyond the limitations of Japan's pacifist constitution.

China, Russia and North Korea top Japan's security concerns in the 500-page report. Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi, in a statement in the report, said the Indo-Pacific region is "at the center" of international strategic competition.

The report calls Russia's war on Ukraine a "serious violation of international law" and raises "concerns that the effects of such unilateral changes to the status quo by force may extend to the Indo-Pacific region."

Strategic competition between states has intensified amid a changing global power balance and is "further complicated by factors such as China's broad and rapid military buildup," the report said.

The paper doubled its contents on Taiwan from a previous edition last year. It raised concerns over Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its impact on Asia, possibly setting a precedent for what may happen between China and Taiwan.

The report noted growing tension between Washington and Beijing over Taiwan, as the U.S. continues to send warships through the Taiwan Strait and sell arms to Taipei, while Chinese warplanes have increasingly entered Taiwanese airspace.

China claims self-governing Taiwan as its own territory to be annexed by force if necessary.

Tokyo is also concerned about China's "relentless" unilateral attempts to change the status quo "by coercion" near the Japanese-controlled East China Sea island it calls Senkaku, which Beijing also claims and calls the Diaoyu.

China aims to build a "world-class military" and has been ramping up the fusion of military and civilian resources, the report said.

In a new chapter devoted to Russia's war on Ukraine, the report said that Russia's international isolation and fatigue from the war may increase the importance of Moscow's political and military cooperation with China.

The report said military cooperation between the two countries should be closely watched because it could have a "direct impact" on Japan's security.

China and Russia are stepping up joint operations and exercises involving their warships and military aircraft around Japan, while Beijing is threatening to use force over Taiwan and escalating regional tensions, Kishi said.

The report comes as Kishida's government pledges to bolster Japan's military capability and budget under a revised national security strategy and basic defense guidelines that are planned for release later this year.

Kishida's governing Liberal Democratic Party has called for doubling Japan's military spending to 2% of its GDP, in line with the NATO standard, to about 10 trillion yen (\$72.6 billion) over the next five years.

Recent media surveys showed the majority of the Japanese public support increased defense spending and deterrence, including possessing pre-emptive strike capability.

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HEADLINE	07/21 Angry Iraqis clash w/police over Turkey
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/turkey-rejects-carrying-deadly-strikes-northern-iraq-87170104

BAGHDAD -- Hundreds of angry Iraqis took to the streets late Thursday to decry deadly strikes on an Iraqi tourist resort the previous day that the government has blamed on Turkey. The protests erupted just hours after the families of those killed in the shelling buried their loved ones.

Turkey's foreign minister rejected accusations that his country's military carried out Wednesday's attack on the district of Zakho in Iraq's semi-autonomous northern Kurdish region. At least eight Iraqis were killed, including a child, and 20 were wounded.

Turkey frequently carries out airstrikes and attacks into northern Iraq and has sent commandos to support its offensives targeting the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK. The insurgents, who have for decades battled the government in Ankara, have bases in the mountainous Iraqi region. And though civilians, mostly local villagers, have been killed in the past, Wednesday's attack marked the first time that tourists visiting the north from elsewhere in Iraq were killed.

Speaking with Turkish state broadcaster TRT, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Turkey was willing to cooperate with Iraqi authorities to shed light on the "treacherous attack." He offered to bring the wounded to Turkey for medical treatment.

The protests outside what was formerly the Turkish Embassy in Baghdad's neighborhood of Waziriah started peacefully but later escalated. Some in the crowd carried signs that read: "Turkey's attacks on civilians is a crime against humanity."

Others threw stones at the riot police and burned tires. At one point, clashes erupted when some demonstrators tried to storm in to replace the Turkish flag that was still flying over the building with an Iraqi one.

Several protesters were hurt when the police threw back some of the stones hurled at them. The Turkish Embassy, which had relocated to the heavily fortified Green Zone last year, cancelled visa appointments for the day.

Earlier Thursday, Iraq's government summoned Turkey's ambassador in protest and caskets carrying the bodies of victims were flown from the semi-autonomous Kurdish-run northern region to Baghdad for burial.

Before the flight, the Iraqi Kurdish region's president, Nechirvan Barzani, laid a wreath on one of the caskets and helped carry it onto a military plane.

At the Baghdad airport, Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi received the dead and met with the families of those killed, offering his condolences. He promised the wounded would be taken care of.

There remained a discrepancy over how many were killed in Wednesday's attack. Iraq's military said eight people died but nine caskets were loaded onto the military plane Thursday.

Cavusoglu, Turkey's top diplomat, claimed the attack was a "smokescreen" aimed "at preventing Turkish military operations in the region."

"We did not conduct any attack against civilians," he said and insisted that Turkey's "fight in Iraq has always been against" the PKK.

Meanwhile, mourners carried the coffin of Abbas Abdul Hussein, a 30-year-old Iraqi killed in Zakho. Hussein had just gotten married five days earlier, his cousin Said Alawadi said, demanding the government "initiate deterrent measures against Turkey," even cut all political and economic ties.

The attack catapulted into the spotlight Turkey's ongoing military operations against Turkey's Kurdish insurgents in northern Iraq — an issue that has long divided Iraqi officials. With deep economic ties between the two countries, many hesitate to damage relations with Ankara.

	<p>Baghdad and Ankara are also divided on other issues, including the Kurdish region's independent oil sector and water-sharing. But in the aftermath of the attack, anger against Turkey is mounting on the Iraqi street.</p> <p>In April, Turkey launched its latest offensive in northern Iraq, part of a series of cross-border operations that started in 2019 to combat the PKK.</p> <p>The Iraqi government condemned Wednesday's attack as a "flagrant violation of Iraq's sovereignty," convened an emergency national security meeting and ordered a pause in dispatching Iraq's new ambassador to Ankara.</p> <p>Iraq's Parliament was also to convene on Saturday to discuss the Turkish attack. Al-Kadhimi accused Turkey of ignoring "Iraq's continuous demands to refrain from military violations against Iraqi territory and the lives of its people."</p> <p>The PKK, listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union, has led an insurgency in southeastern Turkey since 1984 that has killed tens of thousands of people.</p> <p>Ankara has pressed Baghdad to root out the PKK from the Kurdish region. Iraq, in turn, has said Turkey's ongoing attacks are a breach of its sovereignty.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 NKorea warns of security instability
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/korea-warns-security-instability-us-korea-drills-87231281
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea -- North Korea has warned that the United States and South Korea will face "unprecedented" security challenges if they don't stop their hostile military pressure campaign against the North, including joint military drills.</p> <p>North Korea views any regular U.S.-South Korean military training as an invasion rehearsal even though the allies have steadfastly said they have no intention of attacking the North. The latest warning came as Washington and Seoul prepare to expand their upcoming summertime training following the North's provocative run of missile tests this year.</p> <p>"Should the U.S. and its allies opt for military confrontation with us, they would be faced with unprecedented instability security-wise," Choe Jin, deputy director general of the Institute of Disarmament and Peace, a Foreign Ministry-run think tank, told Associated Press Television News in Pyongyang on Thursday.</p> <p>Choe said that Washington and Seoul's joint military drills this year are driving the Korean Peninsula to the brink of war. He accused U.S. and South Korean officials of plotting to discuss the deployment of U.S. nuclear strategic assets during another joint drill set to begin next month.</p> <p>"The U.S. should keep in mind that it will be treated on a footing of equality when it threatens us with nukes," Choe said. He said Washington must abandon "its anachronistic and suicidal policy of hostility" toward North Korea or it will face "an undesirable consequence."</p> <p>The regular U.S.-South Korea military drills are a major source of animosity on the Korean Peninsula, with North Korea often responding with missile tests or warlike rhetoric.</p> <p>In May, U.S. President Joe Biden and new South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said after their summit that they would consider expanded joint military exercises to deter North Korean nuclear threats. Biden also reaffirmed the American extended deterrence commitment to South Korea, a reference to a full range of U.S. defense capabilities including nuclear ones.</p>

Their announcement reflected a change in direction from that of their predecessors. Former U.S. President Donald Trump complained about the cost of the U.S.-South Korean military drills, while former South Korean President Moon Jae-in faced criticism that his dovish engagement policy only helped North Korea buy time to perfect its weapons technology. Yoon accused Moon of tilting toward North Korea and away from the United States.

The U.S. and South Korean militaries haven't officially announced details about their summertime drills including exactly when they would start. But South Korean defense officials said the drills would involve field training for the first time since 2018 along with the existing computer-simulated tabletop exercises.

In recent years, the South Korean and U.S. militaries have cancelled or downsized some of their regular exercises due to concerns about COVID-19 and to support now-stalled U.S.-led diplomacy aimed at convincing North Korea to give up its nuclear program in return for economic and political benefits.

The United States has called on North Korea to resume the dormant diplomacy without any preconditions, but North Korea has countered it won't return to talks unless the United States first drops its hostile policies against it, in an apparent reference to its military drills with South Korea and the economic sanctions.

This year, North Korea has test-launched a slew of ballistic missiles including nuclear-capable ones designed to attack both the U.S. mainland and South Korea in violation of U.N. resolutions banning such tests. Observers say North Korea wants to be recognized as a nuclear state and win sanctions relief.

Choe repeated North Korea's previous position that its missile tests are legitimate exercises of its sovereign right to defend the country. He called the recent U.S. and South Korean missile tests "double-standards."

North Korea hasn't yet conducted its widely expected nuclear test, which would be the first of its kind in five years. Seoul officials say an ongoing COVID-19 outbreak and opposition from China, its most important ally and biggest aid provider, are likely the reasons why North Korea hasn't carried out the bomb test.

On Friday, Yoon told reporters that North Korea remains ready to conduct a nuclear test and that South Korea also has measures ready to cope with it.

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HEADLINE	07/21 NY reports 1st case of polio nearly a decade
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/1st-polio-case-reported-us-decade-detected-york/story?id=87198497
GIST	<p>The first case of polio reported in the U.S. in nearly a decade was detected in New York state, health officials said Thursday.</p> <p>The case is in a resident of Rockland County, the state health department said.</p> <p>State health officials said sequencing determined that the newly detected case is an instance of vaccine-derived polio. The oral polio vaccine contains a weakened version of the polio virus that can be excreted in stool and transmitted.</p> <p>That vaccine has not been administered in the U.S. since 2000, suggesting that the virus may have originated somewhere outside the U.S., health officials said.</p> <p>The Rockland County polio patient is a young adult whose symptoms began a month ago, according to public health officials in Rockland County. The person is no longer contagious but has suffered some paralysis. It is unknown whether that will be permanent.</p> <p>The infected person contracted polio through exposure to someone who was inoculated with the oral vaccine. The patient did not travel outside of the country, so the exposure was here, said health officials,</p>

who are now investigating whether there are any close contacts of the patient who are at risk. There are no other suspected cases at this time.

Health officials urged those who are unvaccinated, and parents of unvaccinated children, to seek polio vaccination now.

"The polio vaccine is safe and effective, protecting against this potentially debilitating disease, and it has been part of the backbone of required, routine childhood immunizations recommended by health officials and public health agencies nationwide," State Health Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett said in a statement.

Rockland County will host vaccine clinics on Friday and Monday, the health department said.

The last known case in the U.S. was recorded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2013, which was also an instance of vaccine-derived polio. The last "wild" case of polio was detected in the U.S. in 1979.

The U.S. uses the inactivated polio vaccine, which cannot cause infection.

Being vaccinated against polio protects people against both vaccine-derived and "wild" polio.

Polio is a very contagious, potentially fatal, virus that can be spread even when an infected person has no symptoms.

Symptoms, which include fatigue, fever, headache, stiffness, muscle pain and vomiting, can take up to 30 days to appear. In rare cases, polio can cause paralysis or death.

"Many of you may be too young to remember polio, but when I was growing up, this disease struck fear in families, including my own," Rockland County Executive Ed Day said in a statement. "The fact that it is still around decades after the vaccine was created shows you just how relentless it is. Do the right thing for your child and the greater good of your community and have your child vaccinated now."

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HEADLINE	07/21 Court temporarily halts immigration policy
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/supreme-court-biden-implement-immigration-policy-87207937
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- The Supreme Court won't allow the Biden administration to implement a policy that prioritizes deportation of people in the country illegally who pose the greatest public safety risk.</p> <p>The court's order Thursday leaves the policy frozen nationwide for now. The vote was 5-4 with conservative Justice Amy Coney Barrett joining liberal Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan and Ketanji Brown Jackson in saying they would have allowed the Biden administration to put in place the guidance.</p> <p>The court also announced it would hear arguments in the case, saying they would be in late November.</p> <p>The order is the first public vote by Jackson since she joined the court June 30 following the retirement of Justice Stephen Breyer.</p> <p>The justices were acting on the administration's emergency request to the court following conflicting decisions by federal appeals courts over a September directive from the Homeland Security Department that paused deportation unless individuals had committed acts of terrorism, espionage or "egregious threats to public safety."</p> <p>The federal appeals court in Cincinnati earlier this month overturned a district judge's order that put the policy on hold in a lawsuit filed by Arizona, Ohio and Montana.</p>

But in a separate suit filed by Texas and Louisiana, a federal judge in Texas ordered a nationwide halt to the guidance and a federal appellate panel in New Orleans declined to step in.

The judge's order amounted to a "nationwide, judicially imposed overhaul of the Executive Branch's enforcement priorities," Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar wrote in a court filing. Prelogar is the administration's top Supreme Court lawyer.

In their Supreme Court filing, Texas and Louisiana argued that the administration's guidance violates federal law that requires the detention of people who are in the U.S. illegally and who have been convicted of serious crimes. The states said they would face added costs of having to detain people the federal government might allow to remain free inside the United States, despite their criminal records.

The guidance, issued after Joe Biden became president, updated a Trump-era policy that removed people in the country illegally regardless of criminal history or community ties.

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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	07/21 Adversaries employ 'cyber mercenaries'
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/hackers-cyber-mercenaries/180263/
GIST	<p>A for-hire cybercriminal group is feeling the talent-drought in tech just like the rest of the sector and has resorted to recruiting so-called "cyber-mercenaries" to carry out specific illicit hacks that are part of larger criminal campaigns.</p> <p>Dubbed Atlas Intelligence Group (A.I.G.), the cybergang has been spotted by security researchers recruiting independent black-hat hackers to execute specific aspects of its own campaigns. A.I.G., also known as Atlantis Cyber-Army, functions as a cyber-threats-as-a-service criminal enterprise. The threat group markets services that include data leaks, distributed denial of service (DDoS), remote desktop protocol (RDP) hijacking and additional network penetration services, according to a Thursday report by threat intelligence firm Cyberint.</p> <p>"[A.I.G.] has introduced us to out-of-the-box thinking," Cyberint's Shmuel Gihon wrote in the report.</p> <p>A.I.G., according to researchers, is unique in its outsourcing approach to committing cybercrimes. Organized threat groups tend to recruit individuals with certain capabilities that they can reuse and incent them with profit sharing. For example, Ransomware-as-a-Service organized crime campaigns can involve multiple threat actors – each getting a cut of any extorted lucre or digital assets stolen. What makes A.I.G. different is it outsources specific aspects of an attack to "mercenaries" who have no further involvement in an attack.</p> <p>The report's author, Gihon, said only A.I.G. administrators and the group's leader—dubbed Mr. Eagle—know fully what the campaign will be and outsource isolated tasks to hired guns based on their skillsets.</p> <p>Unique Business Model</p> <p>This uncommon business model also allows the group, which has been operating since the beginning of May, to offer a range of cybercriminal services instead of a single core competency, he said.</p> <p>"While many groups are focusing on one, maybe two, services that they offer, Atlas seems to grow rapidly and expand its operations in an efficient way which allows them to offer many services," Gihon wrote.</p> <p>A.I.G. tends to target government and state assets in countries all over the world, including the United States, Pakistan, Israel, Colombia and United Arab Emirates, researchers found.</p>

Mr. Eagle not only leads the campaigns but also doubles as a chief marketing officer of sorts, putting a significant effort into advertising A.I.G.'s various cybercriminal services, he said.

Anatomy of a Threat Group

Researchers took a deep dive into how A.I.G. operates, communicates and manages its operations, as well observed the specific cybercriminal services it offers.

[DDoS](#) seems to be the group specialty, with Atlas providing solid proof of execution to customers for as little as 20 euros per victim, researchers said. The group also offers a popular data-leak services that focuses on anything that might be valuable to potential buyers, Gihon said.

A.I.G. has published leaked databases from all over the world for sale, with a starting price from 15 euros, researchers said. The group targeted various sectors in the breaches, including education, finance, government entities, manufacturing and technology, they said.

A.I.G. also has premium services that demand more skill and demonstrate the group's sophistication, researchers said. One of these products is hacked panels and initial access to organizations, with prices for these services starting from about \$1,000.

The group also offers "VIP services" that claim ties to people in law-enforcement positions across Europe that can give customers access to sensitive information about specific individuals, researchers said.

Multi-Channel Communication

Telegram is the communication platform of choice for A.I.G., with the group operating three different Telegram channels with thousands of subscribers, researchers said. One is a database marketplace for selling [leaked databases](#), and another is a commercial channel that also includes announcements and updates from the group, they said.

Atlas also operates a unique Telegram channel in which Mr. Eagle and the group's administrators publish the contracts that the group offers to those hired to perform attacks. This allows subscribers to sign up depending on what they can offer and helps the group recruit various cybercriminals, such as red teamers, social engineers and malware developers, researchers said.

Atlas sells its services primarily on an e-commerce store on the site Sellix.io, a forum that offers payment with cryptocurrency and acts as a broker, providing the privacy-conscious group with an extra layer of anonymity, Gihon said.

"Observing the behavior of the group in general and the leader in particular, it seems that operation security (OpSec) is a top priority," he wrote.

The (Mr.) Eagle Has Landed

Indeed, the group's leader is an enigmatic figure who appears to run a tight ship in terms of his overall maturity and professionalism, exhibiting logical and meticulous decision-making and behavior that leaves "no room for errors," Gihon wrote.

"Mr.Eagle tends to have very strict rules in the management of the group, including banning and throwing [out] scammers and other threat actors that try to advertise their products," he wrote. "It seems that Mr.Eagle maintains very high reliability among the group."

This type of leadership apparently comes in handy when delegating tasks to general administrators, of which A.I.G. appears to have at least four—dubbed El Rojo, Mr.Shawji, S41T4M4 and Coffee, researchers said. The administrators carry out day-to-day advertising tasks as well as management of group operations and communication channels, researchers said.

	The hired contractors, or “mercenaries,” who carry out the nefarious activities of the group are the lowest rung of the A.I.G. structural ladder. This part of the group is a revolving door of cybercriminals who are hired to work only on a particular campaign based on their skillset, researchers said.
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HEADLINE	07/21 Kyiv ‘full dress rehearsal’ Russia hacks
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/ukraine-cyber-officials-prepare-for-attacks/
GIST	<p>Ukraine has long been on the front line of many of the most devastating cyberattacks attributed to Russian state-sponsored hackers, from a 2015 power grid attack to the infamous 2017 NotPetya malware infections that spread around the world and caused billions of dollars in damages.</p> <p>More recently, in the weeks leading up to the Russian invasion, Ukraine suffered a series of breaches that officials blamed on Russia. These attacks helped prepare the country to battle back against Moscow’s arsenal of digital weapons.</p> <p>“For us it was like a full dress rehearsal,” Illya Vityuk, head of the cybersecurity department of the Ukrainian State Security Service, said referring to a DDoS and wiper attacks on government websites that began on Jan. 13.</p> <p>Vityuk made the remarks during a Fordham University cybersecurity event this week co-hosted by FBI. He was among several Ukrainian cybersecurity officials that the U.S. paid to travel to the event and to meet with officials in New York and Washington.</p> <p>The timing of those attacks was a “mistake” on Russia’s part, Vityuk said. They only served as a rallying cry to unify digital defense efforts in the country in the last weeks leading up to the invasion, he said.</p> <p>In fact, Ukrainian officials began rehearsing even earlier, said Andrii Sharonov, first deputy chief of the country’s Cyber Police Department. In July, an advanced persistent threat group known as Armageddon, or Shuckworm, began a month-long cyberattack. Shuckworm has recently used phishing attacks to distribute malware, including new variants of the “Backdoor.Pterodo” payload, according to researchers.</p> <p>The Shuckworm hacking team is closely tied to the Russian intelligence service FSB.</p> <p>But Sharonov said the Russians haven’t been very effective since hacking the American satellite company Viasat, taking out communications in Ukraine just ahead of the invasion on Feb. 24. It seems like the Russians don’t have “much [left] in their pockets,” he said.</p> <p>The January 2017 NotPetya attacks were a critical turning point for the country’s cyber defense evolution, according to Victor Zhora, the deputy chairman of the State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection of Ukraine. The NotPetya attack emanated from the Russian Main Intelligence Directorate, commonly known as the GRU, and unleashed malware that drove nearly \$10 billion in losses worldwide.</p> <p>NotPetya caused immense damage — even knocking out the radiation monitoring system at Ukraine’s Chernobyl nuclear power plant — but spurred the Ukrainian government to get serious about cyber defense, Zhora said. “It was a huge signal to the government.”</p> <p>So were the BlackEnergy cyberattacks in December 2015. Some 230,000 Ukrainians were left without power after Russia attacked the energy grid in the country’s west. After those attacks, the Ukrainian government adopted a cyber defense strategy and national cybersecurity infrastructure, according to Natalia Tkachuk, head of cybersecurity for the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine.</p> <p>Zhora said that while Ukraine has not yet faced devastating cyberattacks, he believes the Russians “continue to be very dangerous.”</p>

	<p>Zhora and his colleagues will travel to Washington next week to meet with officials from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, the FBI and the State Department.</p> <p>“There is no country in the world who can protect themselves alone,” Zhora said</p> <p>The Ukrainians were clear about their appreciation for the U.S. and global democracies at large throughout the discussion. Vityuk offered an anecdote, likening the Ukrainian experience with Russia to that of a lone pedestrian on a dark street when suddenly two dozen thugs armed with knives appear. He said in his mind’s eye that lone pedestrian fights because he has “no other options.”</p> <p>“Probably you will die: That’s what we felt from February 24,” Vityuk said.</p> <p>But he added that when good samaritans appear it changes everything.</p> <p>“Somebody throws you a baseball bat,” Vityuk said. “And then you see that there are a couple of other guys who are probably about to help and then you see there are more guys coming — that’s what we experience now.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/22 Ukraine radio stations victimized in hack
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/07/ukrainian-radio-stations-hacked-to.html
GIST	<p>Ukrainian radio operator TAVR Media on Thursday became the latest victim of a cyberattack, resulting in the broadcast of a fake message that President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was seriously ill.</p> <p>"Cybercriminals spread information that the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, is allegedly in intensive care, and his duties are performed by the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, Ruslan Stefanchuk," the State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection of Ukraine (SSSCIP) said in an update.</p> <p>The radio holding company oversees nine major radio stations, including Hit FM, Radio ROKS, KISS FM, Radio RELAX, Melody FM, Nashe Radio, Radio JAZZ, Classic Radio, and Radio Bayraktar.</p> <p>In a separate post on Facebook, TAVR Media disclosed its servers and networks were targeted in a cyberattack and it's working to resolve the issue. The company also emphasized that "no information about the health problems of the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy is true."</p> <p>The false reports, which were broadcasted between 12 and 2 p.m., also prompted Zelenskyy to take to Instagram, stating, "I have never felt as healthy as I do now."</p> <p>The provenance of the intrusion remains unknown as yet, although several threat actors have capitalized on the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine to carry out a barrage of cyberattacks, with hacking groups taking sides.</p> <p>In a related development, the Computer Emergency Response Team of Ukraine (CERT-UA) also warned of macro-laden PowerPoint documents being used to deploy Agent Tesla malware targeting state organizations of the country.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 MedusaLocker criminal network campaign
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/ransomware/scanning-for-red-team-tools-reveals-likely-campaign-tied-to-medusalocker-ransomware
GIST	Censys announced Thursday it mapped several servers that were roped into the MedusaLocker criminal network as either proxies or ransomware victims using an interesting technique: scanning the internet for common red-teaming tools.

In late June, the company produced a report looking at the prevalence of the top 1,000 software products exposed on the 7.4 million servers it regularly scans in Russia. Nine servers had the pen testing tool Metasploit which is often used in attacks, and of those, one hosted several other pen testing tools used in attacks, including Acunetix, Posh, and Deimos. Given that only a single server had the collection, Censys believed there was a good chance that it was not the cocktail being administered by a pen testing company. The certificates and Jarm fingerprints from the Russian server, as well as current and historical data from internet scans, Censys was able to map out consistent overlap with indicators of [the MedusaLocker campaign](#) around the world.

"A lot of scanning is looked at as being right of bang, so to speak — it takes place after events occurred. This is kind of the other way around, something we can leverage to be proactive," said Matt Lembright, a researcher with Censys.

Censys researchers believe the data they found, the certificates and fingerprints as well as other indicators of attack, including software used to turn breached computers into proxies to mask attacks as well as pathways to funnel cryptocurrency.

While internet scans provide evidence that a computer exists, they provide no means to contact its owner. Censys is working with the FBI to deanonymize potential victims to allow them to remediate. The company spotted U.S. victims in Virginia, Ohio, New Jersey and California, as well as global victims as far as Taiwan, China and the Netherlands.

"I think we'll be able to discover more campaigns this way," said Lembright. "For these hosts to do what they're doing, they have to be on the internet, they have to be available, they have to be ready for a callback or ready to communicate with their hosts."

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HEADLINE	07/21 MS Office most exploited software in attack
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/microsoft-office-malware-attacks-exploite-flaws/
GIST	<p>Atlas VPN has shared its findings for Q1 2022, in which the company revealed startling stats about Microsoft Office. Reportedly, Microsoft Office has become the most commonly exploited software in malware attacks.</p> <p>It is a fact that most Microsoft Office security flaws are publicly known which makes it easy for cybercriminals to exploit them. On the other hand, because most users ignore essential software updates, scammers can easily inject malicious code after exploiting security loopholes.</p> <p>According to researchers, some Microsoft Office vulnerabilities are being exploited more than others. These include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. CVE-2018-08022. CVE-2017-85703. CVE-2017-11882 <p>These flaws allow system infection, execute commands autonomically, and spread malware infection including the nasty Cobalt Strike one. Despite that security updates are available for these vulnerabilities, these still top the list of most exploited flaws. This indicates that users need to ramp up software security to stay protected.</p> <p>Atlas VPN wrote that around 78.5% of all malware attacks are launched by targeting Microsoft Office vulnerabilities. Per the Q4 2021 data shared by Kaspersky's malware research platform Securelist, Microsoft was targeted in 61% of the attacks last year.</p> <p>Therefore, it can be assumed that hackers are increasingly abusing MS Office, and there's been a rise in software exploitation since last year.</p>

In contrast, browser exploits have become rare as they are updated automatically. Android (4.1%), Java (3.48%), Adobe Flash (3.49%), and PDF (2.79%) exploits didn't show any drastic changes in percentages in Q1 2022.

MS Office is a widely used software. Today, over 1.2 billion individuals and companies across 140 countries and 107 languages use Microsoft Office. For this reason alone, ensuring that the software is properly patched and updated is essential. It is also necessary to follow basic cybersecurity practices and always patch the software as soon as an update is available.

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HEADLINE	07/21 Israel spyware vendor targeted journalists
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/chrome-zero-day-used-to-infect-journalists-with-candiru-spyware/
GIST	<p>The Israeli spyware vendor Candiru was found using a zero-day vulnerability in Google Chrome to spy on journalists and other high-interest individuals in the Middle East with the 'DevilsTongue' spyware.</p> <p>The flaw tracked as CVE-2022-2294 is a high-severity heap-based buffer overflow in WebRTC, which, if successfully exploited, may lead to code execution on the target device.</p> <p>When Google patched the zero-day on July 4th, it disclosed that the flaw was under active exploitation but provided no further details.</p> <p>In a report published earlier today, Avast's threat researchers, who discovered the vulnerability and reported it to Google, reveal that they unearthed it after investigating spyware attacks on their clients.</p> <p>Multiple campaigns and delivery methods</p> <p>According to Avast, Candiru began exploiting CVE-2022-2294 in March 2022, targeting users in Lebanon, Turkey, Yemen, and Palestine.</p> <p>The spyware operators employed common watering hole attack tactics, compromising a website their targets will visit and exploiting an unknown vulnerability in the browser to infect them with spyware.</p> <p>This attack is particularly nasty because it requires no interaction with the victim, such as clicking on a link or downloading something. Instead, all that's needed is for them to open the site in Google Chrome or another Chromium-based browser.</p> <p>These websites can either be legitimate ones that were somehow compromised or created by the threat actors and promoted via spear phishing or other methods.</p> <p>In one case, the attackers compromised a website used by a news agency in Lebanon and planted JavaScript snippets that enabled XXS (cross-site scripting) attacks and rerouted valid targets to the exploit server.</p> <p>Once the victims reached the server, they were profiled in great detail using about 50 data points. If the target was deemed valid, encrypted data exchange was established for the zero-day exploit to take place.</p> <p>"The collected information includes the victim's language, timezone, screen information, device type, browser plugins, referrer, device memory, cookie functionality, and more," explains Avast's report.</p> <p>In the Lebanon case, the zero-day enabled the actors to achieve shellcode execution inside a renderer process and was further chained with a sandbox escape flaw that Avast couldn't recover for analysis. Because the flaw was located in WebRTC, it also affected Apple's Safari browser. However, the exploit seen by Avast only worked on Windows.</p>

After the initial infection, DevilsTongue used a BYOVD ("bring your own driver") step to elevate its privileges and gain read and write access to the compromised device's memory.

Interestingly, Avast discovered that the BYOVD used by Candiru was also a zero-day, and even if the vendor pushes a security update, it won't help against the spyware because the vulnerable version comes bundled with it.

While it is not clear what data the attackers were targeting, Avast believes the threat actors used it to learn more about what news stories the targeted journalist was researching.

"We can't say for sure what the attackers might have been after however, often, the reason why attackers [go after journalists](#) is to spy on them and the stories they're working on directly or to get to their sources and gather compromising information and sensitive data they shared with the press." - Avast.

The ongoing spyware threat

Commercial spyware vendors are known for developing or buying zero-day exploits to attack persons of interest for their clients.

The last time Candiru was [exposed by Microsoft and Citizen Lab](#), the firm retracted all DevilsTongue operations and worked in the shadow to implement new zero-days, as Avast now reveals.

Unfortunately, this also means that the same will happen again, so even if you apply security updates immediately, it doesn't make you immune to commercial spyware.

To tackle this problem, Apple plans to introduce a new iOS 16 feature called '[Lockdown Mode](#),' which limits the device's features and functionality to prevent sensitive data leaks or minimize the implications of a spyware infection.

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HEADLINE	07/21 Fast entry point: bargains on dark web
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/market-bargains-dark-web-novice-cybercriminals-quick-start
GIST	<p>Would-be cybercriminals can easily buy advanced tools, common exploits, and stolen credentials on underground markets for a few dollars — a low barrier to entry for novices, according to a study of 33,000 Dark Web marketplaces.</p> <p>According to new analysis from HP Wolf Security and researchers at Forensic Pathways, there are plenty of bargains to be had. Out of the 174 exploits found advertised on the Dark Web, 91% cost less than \$10, while 76% of the more than 1,650 advertisements for malware have a similar price.</p> <p>Other common attacker assets also have similarly low prices: The average cost, for example, for stolen credentials for accessing a Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) instance is just \$5.</p> <p>While more advanced malware groups use private forums to trade zero-day exploits, the available credentials, exploits, and tools on offer in the wider underground economy allow novices to quickly create a credible toolset, says Alex Holland, senior malware analyst at HP and primary author of the report.</p> <p>Novice cybercriminals "can use a freely available open source tool, and — as long as you are skilled enough to encrypt, use a packer, use techniques to evade defenses — then that tool will do a perfectly good job," he says.</p> <p>The study of Dark Web marketplaces analyzed approximately 33,000 active sites, forums, and marketplaces over a two-month period, finding that the market for basic tools and knowledge is well entrenched, and attracting new customers all the time.</p>

The increase in the number of threat actors could mean businesses will find their operations targeted even more than they are today, according to Michael Calce, HP Security Advisory Board member and former hacker (aka MafiaBoy). HP brought in criminologists and former hackers to help put the study in context.

"Today, only a small minority of cybercriminals really code, most are just in it for the money — and the barrier to entry is so low that almost anyone can be a threat actor," Calce says in the report. "That's bad news for businesses."

To protect themselves from the swelling ranks of cyberattackers, HP recommends that companies do the basics, using automation and best practices to reduce their attack surface area. In addition, businesses need to regularly conduct exercises to help plan for and respond to the worst-case attacks, as attackers will increasingly attempt to limit executives choices following an attack to make ransom payments the best worst option.

"If the worst happens and a threat actor breaches your defenses, then you don't want this to be the first time you have initiated an incident response plan," Joanna Burkey, chief information security officer at HP, says in the report. "Ensuring that everyone knows their roles, and that people are familiar with the processes they need to follow, will go a long way to containing the worst of the impact."

Cybercrime Convergence: Nation-State Tactics Blend With Financial Campaigns

The report also found that advanced actors are becoming more professional, using increasingly destructive attacks to scale up the pressure on victims to pay. At the same time, financially motivated cybercriminals groups continue to adopt many of the tactics used by high-end nation-state threat actors.

These especially focus on [living-off-the-land attacks](#) where the attacker uses system administration tools to avoid endpoint-detection systems that would otherwise flag malware, according to HP.

While the shift likely comes from the transfer of knowledge as cybercriminals become more skillful and learn the latest tactics used by advanced persistent threats, a number of groups are also blending nation-state activities—such as cyberespionage — and cybercriminal activities aimed at turning a profit. The leak of text messages from the Conti group highlighted that the members [occasionally conducted operations](#) at the request of at least two Russian government agencies.

Ransomware Is Here to Stay

Elsewhere in the report, researchers note that ransomware gangs will focus on timing their attacks to put the most pressure on organizations, such as attacking retailers during the holiday seasons, the agriculture sector during harvest seasons, or universities as students return to school.

Ransomware has [declined in the first half of the year](#) for various reasons, but HP sees the trend as temporary.

"We don't see ransomware going away, but we do see it evolving over time," Holland says. "Ransomware attacks will actually become more creative."

Enforcing Ethics on the Dark Web

The study also found that trust continues to be a major problem for Dark Web markets in the same way that online businesses have had to deal with fraud and bad actors. The Dark Web, of course, has facets that make trust even harder to come by: A website on the anonymous Tor network, for example, has an average lifespan of 55 days, according to the researchers.

To ensure that vendors and customers play fair, the marketplaces have adopted many of the same strategies as legitimate businesses. Vendors are usually required to offer a bond of thousands of dollars to ensure trust. Customers can leave ratings on every marketplace. And escrow payments have become commonplace, with 85% of transactions using escrow payment systems.

HEADLINE	07/21 Mysterious, cloud-enabled Mac spyware
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/mysterious-cloud-enabled-macos-spyware
GIST	<p>A previously unknown macOS spyware has surfaced in a highly targeted campaign, which exfiltrates documents, keystrokes, screen captures, and more from Apple machines. Interestingly, it exclusively uses public cloud-storage services for housing payloads and for command-and-control (C2) communications — an unusual design choice that makes it difficult to trace and analyze the threat.</p> <p>Dubbed CloudMensis by the researchers at ESET who discovered it, the backdoor was developed in Objective-C. ESET's analysis of the malware released this week shows that after initial compromise, the cyberattackers behind the campaign gain code execution and privilege escalation using known vulnerabilities. Then, they install a first-stage loader component that retrieves the actual spyware payload from a cloud storage provider. In the sample the firm analyzed, pCloud was used to store and deliver the second stage, but the malware also supports Dropbox and Yandex as cloud repositories.</p> <p>The spy component then sets about harvesting a bevy of sensitive data from the compromised Mac, including files, email attachments, messages, audio recordings, and keystrokes. In all, researchers said it supports 39 different commands, including a directive to download additional malware.</p> <p>All of the ill-gotten data is encrypted using a public key found in the spy agent; and it requires a private key, owned by the CloudMensis operators, for its decryption, according to ESET.</p> <p>Spyware in the Cloud</p> <p>The most notable aspect of the campaign, other than the fact that Mac spyware is a rare find, is its exclusive use of cloud storage, according to the analysis.</p> <p>"CloudMensis perpetrators create accounts on cloud-storage providers such as Dropbox or pCloud," Marc-Etienne M.Léveillé, senior malware researcher at ESET, explains to Dark Reading. "The CloudMensis spyware contains authentication tokens that allow them to upload and download files from these accounts. When the operators want to send a command to one of its bots, they upload a file to the cloud storage. The CloudMensis spy agent will fetch that file, decrypt it, and run the command. The result of the command is encrypted and uploaded to the cloud storage for the operators to download and decrypt."</p> <p>This technique means that there are no domain name nor IP address in the malware samples, he adds: "The absence of such indicator makes it difficult to track infrastructure and block CloudMensis at the network level."</p> <p>While a notable approach, it's been used in the PC world before by groups like Inception (aka Cloud Atlas) and APT37 (aka Reaper or Group 123). However, "I think it is the first time we've seen it in Mac malware," M.Léveillé notes.</p> <p>Attribution, Victimology Remain a Mystery</p> <p>So far, things are, well, cloudy when it comes to the provenance of the threat. One thing that's clear is that the intention of the perpetrators is espionage and intellectual property theft — potentially a clue as to the type of threat, since spying is traditionally the domain of advanced persistent threats (APTs).</p> <p>However, the artifacts ESET was able to uncover from the attacks showed no ties to known operations. "We could not attribute this campaign to a known group, neither from the code similarity or infrastructure," M.Léveillé says.</p> <p>Another clue: The campaign is also tightly targeted — usually the hallmark of more sophisticated actors. "Metadata from cloud storage accounts used by CloudMensis revealed the samples we analyzed has run on 51 Macs between Feb. 4 and Apr. 22," M.Léveillé says. Unfortunately, "we have no information about the geolocation or vertical of the victims because files are deleted from the cloud storage."</p> <p>However, countering the APT-ish aspects of the campaign, the sophistication level of the malware itself is not that impressive, ESET noted.</p>

"The general quality of the code and lack of obfuscation shows the authors may not be very familiar with Mac development and are not so advanced," according to [the report](#).

M.Léveillé characterizes CloudMensis as a medium-advanced threat, and noted that unlike [NSO Group's formidable Pegasus spyware](#), CloudMensis builds no zero-day exploits into its code.

"We did not see CloudMensis use undisclosed vulnerabilities to bypass Apple's security barriers," says M.Léveillé. "However, we did find that CloudMensis used known vulnerabilities (also known as one-day or n-day) on Macs that do not run the latest version of macOS [to bypass security mitigations]. We do not know how the CloudMensis spyware is installed on victims' Macs so perhaps they do use undisclosed vulnerabilities for that purpose, but we can only speculate. This places CloudMensis somewhere in the middle in the scale of sophistication, more than average, but not the most sophisticated either."

How to Protect Your Business from CloudMensis & Spyware

To avoid becoming a victim of the CloudMensis threat, the use of vulnerabilities to work around macOS mitigations means that running up-to-date Macs is the first line of defense for businesses, according to ESET. Though the initial-compromise vector isn't known in this case, implementing all the rest of the basics like strong passwords and phishing-awareness training is also a good defense.

Researchers also recommended turning on [Apple's new Lockdown Mode](#) feature.

"Apple has recently acknowledged the presence of spyware targeting users of its products and is previewing Lockdown Mode on iOS, iPadOS, and macOS, which disables features frequently exploited to gain code execution and deploy malware," according to the analysis. "Disabling entry points, at the expense of a less fluid user experience, sounds like a reasonable way to reduce the attack surface."

Above all, M.Léveillé cautions businesses against being lulled into a false sense of security when it comes to Macs. While malware targeting Macs has traditionally been less prevalent than Windows or Linux threats, [that is now changing](#).

"Businesses using Macs in their fleet should protect them the same way they would protect computers running Windows or any other operating systems," he warns. "With the Mac sales increasing year after year, their users have become an interesting target for financially motivated criminals. State-sponsored threat groups also have the resources to adapt to their targets and develop the malware they need to fulfill their missions, regardless of the operating system."

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HEADLINE	07/21 Hackers use PayPal accounts: fake invoices
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/news/email-security/hackers-use-paypal-accounts-to-spoof-popular-brands-create-fake-invoices?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Researchers on Thursday found another way hackers are getting into user inboxes: creating fake invoices in PayPal, and using the legitimacy of the site to get into the inbox.</p> <p>In a blog post, Avanan researchers said starting in June of this year they have seen hackers use PayPal to send malicious invoices and request payments.</p> <p>Here's what they do: The hackers send the email from PayPal's domain, using a free PayPal account that they have signed up for, with the email body spoofing brands like Norton. The hackers then leverage legitimate and popular websites to get into inboxes and steal credentials and money.</p> <p>Obviously, Avanan has reported on a very difficult class of phishing attack to counter with the usual technology-based tools, said Patrick Tiquet, vice president, security and architecture at Keeper Security. Tiquet said prevention of this kind of attack really comes down to training and awareness.</p>

	<p>“Users must be made aware that this kind of attack exists and how to recognize it,” Tiquet said. “This is the only way of preventing this, short of filtering and analyzing all emails that appear to be an invoice. Security awareness training, to be truly effective, must be continuously updated to ensure that users are aware of the latest threats.”</p> <p>Patrick Harr, chief executive officer at SlashNext, said companies need to include social engineering scams like these in phishing training programs. Harr said the modern hybrid workforce uses personal technology (bring your own device, or BYOD) and mobile, particularly, as most companies do not have all employees on managed devices.</p> <p>“Companies need a BYOD strategy that includes multi-channel phishing and malware protection to protect social, gaming, and all messaging apps,” Harr said. “Training should include social engineering scams to demonstrate how personal interactions, such as social media interactions, can impact their work-life.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Ransomware network with US connections?
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/researchers-ransomware-network/
GIST	<p>Typically, when it comes to ransomware, researcher and cybersecurity companies scramble after attacks to understand the origin of the malware that infected systems and locked crucial data.</p> <p>But researchers with Censys, a firm that indexes devices connected to the internet, said Thursday they’ve flipped the typical script and found what appears to be a ransomware command and control network capable of launching attacks, including one host located in the U.S.</p> <p>Matt Lembright, Censys’ director of federal applications and author of the report, told CyberScoop that they came across the network after running a search through the company’s data for the top 1,000 software products currently observable on Russian hosts. After seeing Metasploit — penetration testing software frequently used for legitimate purposes — on just nine hosts out of more than 7.4 million, the team did some additional digging.</p> <p>The team eventually found two Russian-based hosts containing a combination of Acunetix, a web vulnerability tester, and DeimosC2, a command and control tool to use on compromised machines after exploitation.</p> <p>Further analysis that included historical data tied to those hosts led the researchers to additional hosts and connections to the MedusaLocker ransomware variant, which was the subject of a July 1 alert from the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.</p> <p>The company shared the findings in hopes that the wider research and security community would research this network further, said Matt Lembright, Censys’ director of federal applications.</p> <p>“For folks that live and breathe this every single day, there might be something for them to latch on to here,” Lembright said.</p> <p>The information has been shared with the FBI, he added, to determine whether it’s connected to any known attacks.</p> <p>One of the hosts in the network is located in Ohio, according to the data, and was running the DeimosC2 tool as recently as July 6. Other software present on the host indicated it might be serving as a proxy in the network, and a historical review of the host revealed that it hosted malware for a short period in October 2021 later tied to the Karma ransomware strain.</p> <p>Allan Liska, a threat intelligence analyst with Recorded Future, said Thursday that the data “Censys uncovered appears to indicate an ongoing ransomware campaign, likely tied to MedusaLocker or one of its derivatives.”</p>

	<p>MedusaLocker “has been an active, but smaller, ransomware group over the last few years,” he added. “They do not operate an extortion site so it is difficult to pinpoint the true number of victims they have hit.”</p> <p>Lembright told CyberScoop that the findings don’t definitively spell out exactly what this network is, or what it’s done, but hopefully it can help.</p> <p>“I can’t say definitively that these hosts haven’t attacked anyone yet, but they’re definitely capable of it,” he said. The idea is to share both the historical and current data associated with the hosts to unpack a potential network and prevent future damage. “This is kind of a chance to go out into the world and do some active hunting.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Tech industry layoffs undo diversity gains?
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/tech-layoffs-diversity/
GIST	<p>TECH COMPANY PROFITS and stock prices rose to new heights over the past two years—but the industry’s pandemic-proof confidence has now turned sickly. Economic worries have prompted tech giants and startups to cut costs, freeze hiring, or even begin layoffs. Last week, <i>The Washington Post</i> reported that an internal memo at Meta encouraged managers to identify low performers to eject, as the tech giant, like many others, prepares for leaner times.</p> <p>“It reminds me of the dot-com bust—the very first tightening of the belt, reining in the exuberance,” says Coco Brown, CEO of the Athena Alliance, a networking organization for women executives in business, including tech and venture capital. That means tech companies will offer less generous salaries and fewer office perks—and likely have less diverse workforces.</p> <p>People working to improve diversity in tech are worried that companies looking to cut costs may end up undoing the modest progress they have made toward diversifying their workforces through hiring more women, LGBTQ people, and people of color.</p> <p>That’s because many times the roles that historically underrepresented groups are hired into tend to be seen as the most expendable, says Sarah Kaplan, director of the Institute for Gender and the Economy at Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto.</p> <p>When her students are hired into technical positions, Kaplan has noticed that women are offered less prestigious roles. “A male engineer will get hired into a coding job, and a female engineer will be hired into a user interface job, where coding is seen as one of the most high-status positions,” she says. “Even as companies have tried to make progress, that progress has not always been in the highest status and most highly compensated areas.”</p> <p>A 2018 Pew Research study found that the tech industry is one of the least diverse areas of the STEM fields. In the same year, Google reported that only 2.5 percent of its workforce identified as Black and 3.6 percent as Hispanic and Latinx.</p> <p>In 2020, in the wake of George Floyd’s murder, The Plug, a media and research company focused on the Black tech ecosystem, found that some 200 tech companies promised to make greater efforts toward diversity, equity, and inclusion. There have been modest gains—Google’s most recent diversity report shows that 5.3 percent of its workforce are now Black and 6.9 percent Latinx—but Kaplan says the figures tech companies offer to measure diversity can make it hard to truly know whether substantial change is being made.</p> <p>For instance, figures released by Amazon reveal that the most diverse level of the company is also the lowest, categorized as “field and customer support.” “All of [Amazon’s] diversity is in their warehouse operations,” Kaplan says. “Companies that have big cafeterias and things like that often are counting their cafeteria staff, and [those jobs] would be more likely to be populated by underrepresented minorities or people from lower socioeconomic groups.”</p>

Certain departments at tech companies outside engineering, such as business development, customer success, communications, and marketing, also tend to be more heavily stacked with women and historically underrepresented ethnic minorities. Brown says these types of roles have garnered increasing respect and prominence in recent years. But Mimi Fox Melton, CEO at Code 2040, a nonprofit that helps early career Black and Latinx technologists advance in the industry, says individuals in these roles are still more likely to face layoffs because they are seen as less essential to the business than those who develop or maintain the product.

“Most of the time, you see BIPOC candidates being hired into the HR and recruitment space,” says Fox Melton. “But in a hiring freeze, you don’t need as many people recruiting candidates, so those people will face layoffs.”

Kaplan also told WIRED that managers often don’t take into account how processes used to identify workers or roles to eliminate may be biased against certain demographics. “Even systems that are designed to be neutral end up disadvantaging women and people of color,” she says. Research has shown that in performance reviews, women and especially people of color are often [rated lower](#) for similar performance than their colleagues, making them appear to contribute less than they really do. Choosing to lay off newer employees and protect those who have demonstrated loyalty by staying at the company for several years might sound reasonable in theory, but in practice Kaplan says this method would put people hired as part of more recent pushes for diversity on the chopping block.

“In their early growth stages, most companies hire by referral,” says Fox Melton. “We know that 75 percent of white people have all-white networks, meaning that companies are more likely to be hiring more and more white people early on.”

Tech companies’ efforts to bring workers back to their luxe offices may also end up reducing workforce diversity. The remote work revolution prompted by the pandemic helped companies seeking to bring in employees from underrepresented backgrounds, says Bhaskar Chakravorti, dean of global business at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Meta’s most recent [diversity report](#) acknowledged remote work as a key factor in bringing in a more diverse pool of talent.

“When companies hire more diverse people from places like Atlanta, or in Texas, or the South they can retain them because they’re allowing them to work close to their social networks, and their homes, and their communities,” Chakravorti says. “And that helps employees of color because they feel that they don’t have to move to a city like Boston, which is quite alienating for a lot of employees of color, because it’s not the friendliest environment.”

With many tech companies, including [Google](#), now pushing workers to return to the office, Chakravorti says some women and BIPOC employees are choosing to leave of their own accord. Women still do the bulk of [household management and childcare](#), and while remote work [doesn’t guarantee equality](#), a [survey](#) conducted last year by FlexJobs found that 68 percent of women would prefer to continue to work remotely, with many citing work-life balance. Being required to return to the office threatens to throw off that balance. “It is making it harder for women,” Chakravorti says.

A survey of knowledge workers last year by workplace chat tool Slack found that [97 percent](#) of Black knowledge workers wanted either hybrid or totally remote work permanently, compared with 79 percent of white workers. Many Black people said they found working from home to be less stressful, partly because it did not require them to [code switch](#) between different social contexts. “If the choice is between being in an office environment where I have to experience daily microaggressions and working from home, I am going to choose to work from home,” says Fox Melton.

Chakravorti says that while it may feel more comfortable, remote work can also disadvantage women and employees of color because it’s white and male managers who are often most eager to spend time in the office. When those managers later choose who to delegate important projects to, they’re likely to be susceptible to [“proximity bias.”](#) “Of course, it’s the folks who are right there in front of the project lead,”

says Chakravorti. “Then 12 months later, who gets promoted? It’s the person who was given the responsibilities in the first place.” In other words, hybrid work arrangements that people from marginalized groups may favor can end up reinforcing those group’s existing disadvantages.

Fox Melton says that although she too is worried that layoffs and hiring freezes could undo years of work to diversify tech, she also believes companies can resist that pattern if they choose. “The tech companies we work with have shown a sustained interest in our candidates; we haven’t seen a decrease in demand,” she says. “Companies that are really committed to diversity understand it can’t just be a ‘strong economy’ commitment.”

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HEADLINE	07/21 Feds: 1st crypto insider trading case
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Feds-1st-cryptocurrency-insider-trading-case-17319916.php
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — A former Coinbase product manager and his brother, along with a Houston man, were charged Thursday in what federal authorities described as the U.S. government’s first cryptocurrency insider trading case.</p> <p>The brothers — Ishan Wahi and Nikhil Wahi — were arrested while the Houston man, Sameer Ramani, remained at large, federal authorities said as they announced the unsealing of an indictment in a federal court in Manhattan.</p> <p>Authorities said Ishan Wahi, 32, was a product manager at Coinbase Global Inc., one of the world's largest cryptocurrency exchanges, based in Seattle, when he provided tips to Nikhil Wahi, 26, and their friend, Ramani, 33. All three were charged with wire fraud conspiracy and wire fraud.</p> <p>The indictment said Ishan Wahi was stopped by law enforcement prior to boarding a May 16 flight to India and was prevented from leaving the country. In the hours before the flight, he had telephoned and sent texts to his brother and Ramani to alert them about an investigation Coinbase was carrying out, according to a release.</p> <p>Ishan Wahi bought a one-way airline ticket to India in an “unsuccessful attempt to flee from the United States” after agreeing to be interviewed for an internal probe by Coinbase, the indictment said.</p> <p>U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said the prosecution represents the government's first insider trading case involving cryptocurrency markets. He said it was a reminder that the cryptocurrency markets are not a law-free zone.</p> <p>Michael Driscoll, head of the FBI’s New York office, said the defendants collected about \$1.5 million in illegal profits by trading in at least 25 different crypto assets.</p> <p>Attorneys representing Ishan Wahi said in an email to The Associated Press that their client is innocent and “intends to defend himself vigorously against these charges and in the SEC action.”</p> <p>Messages seeking comment were sent to other defense lawyers.</p> <p>The Securities and Exchange Commission brought civil insider trading charges against the men in Seattle federal court.</p> <p>The SEC said the charges were brought against the trio after they carried out a scheme to trade ahead of multiple announcements regarding certain crypto assets that were going to be made available for trading on the Coinbase platform.</p> <p>"As today’s case demonstrates, whether in equities, options, crypto assets, or other securities, we will vindicate our mission by identifying and combatting insider trading in securities wherever we see it,” said Carolyn M. Welshhans, Acting Chief of the Enforcement Division’s Crypto Assets and Cyber Unit.</p>

The New York indictment said Ishan Wahi began working as a product manager on the asset listing team in October 2020. It said he provided tips about confidential information to his brother and friend from June 2021 until this past April.

Brian Armstrong, the chief executive for Coinbase, said on Twitter and in a blog post Thursday that the company began an internal probe in April “about possible frontrunning of assets shortly before being listed on Coinbase.”

The indictment said the frontrunning was identified publicly by a Twitter posting in April on an account “that is well known in the crypto community, with hundreds of thousands of followers.”

Armstrong said that the company gathered sufficient evidence and then fired Ishan Wahi and forwarded its findings about the three men to the Justice Department.

He added: “We will investigate and refer bad actors to law enforcement, and they will face real legal consequences including serving prison time.”

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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	07/22 Ex-Irish soldier jailed 15mo. ISIS member
SOURCE	https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/courtandcrime/arid-40924058.html
GIST	<p>Former soldier Lisa Smith, who was found guilty of being a member of the so-called Islamic State group, has been sentenced to 15 months in prison.</p> <p>Mr Justice Tony Hunt did not suspend any portion of the sentence and noted that while Smith is at a low risk for reoffending she was persistent and determined in her efforts to travel to Syria and join Isis and has shown no remorse for her actions.</p> <p>Smith's lawyers have asked the court to permit Ms Smith to be released on bail pending an appeal.</p> <p>Smith was convicted by the three-judge, non-jury court of membership of Isis following a trial earlier this year. She accepted that she travelled to Isis-controlled Syria in 2014 but denied that she had ever joined Isis or any other group.</p> <p>She said she believed she had a religious obligation to live inside the Islamic State created by terrorist leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.</p> <p>Mr Justice Tony Hunt, delivering the court's verdict, said that she went to Syria with her "eyes wide open" having watched videos of Isis atrocities and having taken part in discussions about Isis with jihadis from Germany, Australia, America and parts of the Middle East.</p> <p>He said that her journey to Syria was in itself an act of allegiance and pointed to evidence that she swore an oath of allegiance to al-Baghdadi and that she urged her former husband to do the same and divorced him when he refused.</p> <p>She was the first person to be convicted in an Irish court of an Islamic terrorist offence committed abroad.</p> <p>Smith (40) from Dundalk, Co. Louth, had pleaded not guilty to membership of an unlawful terrorist group, Islamic State, between October 28, 2015, and December 1, 2019. The mother-of-one was convicted of Isis membership following a trial at the three-judge, non-jury Special Criminal Court earlier this year.</p>

	<p>The court found Smith not guilty of a second charge of funding terrorism, saying that it is reasonably possible that she sent €800 to Isis fighter and propagandist, John Georgelas, in May 2015 for his personal use or for "humanitarian reasons", after he had been injured during fighting in Syria.</p> <p>Smith, a convert to Islam, went to Syria in 2015 after terrorist leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi called on Muslims to travel to the country.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/22 Rebels attack military base near Mali capital
SOURCE	https://wnyt.com/associated-press/international/ijhadi-rebels-attack-key-military-base-near-malis-capital/
GIST	<p>BAMAKO, Mali (AP) — Jihadi rebels have attacked Mali's Kati military base on the outskirts of the capital city Bamako, the ruling junta confirmed Friday.</p> <p>It's the first time Kati, Mali's largest military base, has been targeted by extremist rebels in the more than 10-year insurgency in the West African country.</p> <p>Two vehicles loaded with explosives detonated at the camp at about 5 a.m., according to a statement issued by the military.</p> <p>"The Malian Armed Forces vigorously repelled a terrorist attack on the Kati barracks," said the statement, which said that two attackers were killed.</p> <p>"The situation is under control and a sweep is underway to find the perpetrators and their accomplices," said the statement.</p> <p>Friday's attack on the Kati barracks follows a coordinated series of insurgent attacks Thursday. In one of those incidents, the extremists attacked a police base in Kolokani, 60 kilometers (37 miles) north of Bamako and two Malian soldiers were killed, said the military in a statement.</p> <p>The leader of Mali's ruling junta Lt. Col. Assimi Goita frequently stays at the Kati camp, where he launched the 2020 coup that brought him to power.</p> <p>Jihadi rebels linked to al Qaida and the Islamic State group have been fighting an insurgency in Mali for more than a decade. Their attacks have mostly been in northern Mali but recently the extremists have moved into central Mali. In recent weeks they have moved closer to the capital.</p> <p>Last week gunmen attacked an army checkpoint about 60 kilometers (37 miles) outside Bamako, killing at least six people and wounding several others, officials said.</p> <p>No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, but it appears to be by the al-Qaida-linked rebel group known as JNIM that has carried out several other attacks around Bamako.</p> <p>The attacks show "how the al-Qaida affiliate Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin continues to expand its operations outside its traditional strongholds in northern and central Mali," said Héní Nsaibia, a senior researcher at The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project.</p> <p>"As in other Sahelian countries such as Burkina Faso and Niger ... major cities including the capitals themselves, are increasingly surrounded by a steady spread of Islamist militancy that poses an ever-increasing risk and challenge to the security environment."</p> <p>Mali has struggled to contain an Islamic extremist insurgency since 2012. Extremist rebels were forced from power in Mali's northern cities with the help of a French-led military operation, but they regrouped in the desert and began attacking the Malian army and its allies. Insecurity has worsened with attacks in the northern and central regions.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Accelerationists: attack abortion facilities
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/neo-nazi-accelerationists-urge-followers-to-infiltrate-and-attack-abortion-facilities/
GIST	<p>After Department of Homeland Security warnings that violent domestic extremists could use the overturning of <i>Roe v. Wade</i> to “intensify violence against a wide range of targets,” a neo-Nazi accelerationist e-book is encouraging followers to become a patient’s escort in order to infiltrate facilities providing abortion services with the aim of attacking staff or patients.</p> <p>The 261-page guide claiming to be the product of 100 authors and circulated among extremist channels on Telegram is a mix of ideological declarations and tactical advice combining accelerationism, neo-Nazism, and ecofascism while at its core attempting to drive extremists to commit violent acts — including against critical infrastructure and communities of color — in order to hasten societal downfall and benefit white supremacists.</p> <p>The document includes a call for mass shootings of migrants in an effort to deter undocumented immigration, threats for acts of mass violence against crowded venues, declaring that “memorials are our monuments” in praise of mass shooters whom they refer to as “saints,” a call to emulate the 2016 mass shooting at the Pulse nightclub, discussion of CBRN attacks that refers to dirty bombs as “the holy grail of terrorism,” and more.</p> <p>The first reference to abortion in the document is a depiction of a masked individual calling a threat into “the dead baby store” and warning the person on the other end of the line to stop coming into work.</p> <p>“You’re gonna be spending money hiring bodyguards and buying equipment and I’m gonna be watching it all from a nearby park bench and you can’t do shit because I can see you but you can’t see me, or maybe I’ll be one of the protestors you just scowl at before you get to work unaliving the unborn, or maybe I’ll be the driver of one of the girls who’s just coming to get tips on how to best use hormonal birth control to ruin her pairbonding ability as early as possible, or maybe I’ll just get a job as the safety escort and accompany the first one of your customers all the way to the operating room and just shoot you in the face with a concealed handgun if you’d prefer to go out that way,” the threat continues.</p> <p>Later in the document, an author calls abortion “as perverse as it gets” and blames Jews for the practice.</p> <p>“If moral considerations aren’t enough to keep you from murdering your own unborn child, fear of death will have to do,” the page states. “A woman’s right to choose to murder her own offspring. If the alternative to this is ‘controlling women’s bodies,’ that’s a sacrifice we’re willing to make. It’s really just the Natural Order being re-imposed upon a rotten population.”</p> <p>Throughout the guide, readers are urged to escalate their fanaticism to violent action and to dispense with any empathy for their victims. “I prefer to think of myself as an exterminator rather than a murderer,” writes one anonymous author. “Calling me a ‘murderer’ would imply that I view my targets as human — I don’t — and I don’t have a strong emotional reaction to their deaths, either.”</p> <p>While many white supremacists have declared across social media that abortion should be outlawed with the aim of bringing up white birthrates, others have argued that abortion should be legal with the aim of women of color ending their pregnancies. White supremacist memes on Telegram exhort followers to “make many beautiful white babies,” and a meme posted on the Proud Boys’ Telegram account after the Supreme Court ruling featured an image of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh with the words, “It’s over for you hoes.”</p> <p>Changes in abortion laws were cited as one concern that has increased the potential for attacks perpetrated by domestic extremists in the latest version of the National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin released in early June.</p>

“Given a high-profile U.S. Supreme Court case about abortion rights, individuals who advocate both for and against abortion have, on public forums, encouraged violence, including against government, religious, and reproductive healthcare personnel and facilities, as well as those with opposing ideologies,” NTAS said.

“In the coming months, we expect the threat environment to become more dynamic as several high-profile events could be exploited to justify acts of violence against a range of possible targets,” the bulletin stated. “These targets could include public gatherings, faith-based institutions, schools, racial and religious minorities, government facilities and personnel, U.S. critical infrastructure, the media, and perceived ideological opponents. Threat actors have recently mobilized to violence due to factors such as personal grievances, reactions to current events, and adherence to violent extremist ideologies, including racially or ethnically motivated or anti-government/anti-authority violent extremism.”

A [memo](#) to law enforcement and stakeholders from the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Intelligence and Analysis directly after the June 24 Supreme Court ruling said that protests could present “attractive targets” for violent domestic extremists while facilities on either side of the abortion divide as well as faith-based institutions could be targeted for weeks to come.

The multiagency intelligence brief released by DHS I&A, noting the early June arrest of an individual “for a plot in June to kill a US Supreme Court Justice [Kavanaugh]” in response to the leaked draft opinion, assessed that “some domestic violent extremists (DVEs) will likely exploit the recent US Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe V. Wade* to intensify violence against a wide range of targets.”

The memo stressed that expected protests could be seen as soft targets by violent extremists, noting that First Amendment-protected events “probably will be attractive targets for a range of DVEs to commit violence against ideological opponents.”

“Both reproductive and family advocacy healthcare facilities likely will continue to remain primary targets for criminal incidents, and violence could escalate against these facilities or personnel,” the memo continued. “Since May, at least three arson attacks targeting pregnancy resource centers in Oregon and New York and a family advocacy group’s headquarters in Wisconsin have been claimed by ‘Jane’s Revenge’. In May and June, suspected DVEs opposed to abortion rights conducted arson attacks targeting a reproductive healthcare facility in Wyoming and a vacant building that was formerly a reproductive healthcare facility in Washington. Also, in June, a suspected racially or ethnically motivated violent extremist posted online calling for attacks against abortion-related targets in reaction to ‘Jane’s Revenge’ activity.”

“Jane’s Revenge,” the brief notes, is believed to be a reference to the Chicago-based organization “[The Jane Collective](#)” that provided abortions from 1969 until Roe legalized abortion in 1973. After a raid earlier that year, “The Jane Seven” were indicted by a grand jury yet the case was dropped after abortion became legal.

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HEADLINE	07/21 UN: AQ leader alive, communicating freely
SOURCE	https://theprint.in/world/al-qaeda-chief-ayman-al-zawahiri-is-alive-communicating-freely-un-report/1049165/
GIST	<p>Islamabad [Pakistan], July 21 (ANI): Al Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri is confirmed to be living in Afghanistan and ‘communicating freely’, according to a recent report by the United Nations which also warned against the growing strength of terrorist groups including Al Qaeda and Islamic State posing a great threat to the world.</p> <p>According to Pakistani newspaper Dawn, the 30th report of the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team stated that the proof that Al-Zawahiri was alive comes from the video messages issued by the group.</p>

“Al-Zawahiri’s apparent increased comfort and ability to communicate has coincided with the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan and the consolidation of power of key Al Qaeda allies within their de facto administration,” it noted.

The Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the UN took notice of the recent activities of Al Qaeda, the militant Islamic State (IS) group and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan, and stated that the two terrorist outfits remain active in conflict-hit regions and neighbouring countries though both these terrorist groups could attempt to strike in non-conflict areas.

The committee monitors the activities of major militant groups like Al Qaeda, Taliban and various factions of the militant Islamic State (IS) group, which is also known as Daesh. The report covered the activities of terrorist groups in different parts of the world, but majorly included Taliban-run Afghanistan, which has become a ‘safe haven’ for Al Qaeda.

Al Qaeda’s traditional strongholds in Afghanistan have been in the south and east of the war-ravaged country, but recently it appears to be expanding its footprint to the west to the Farah and Herat provinces and possibly to the north, the Dawn reported.

“The situation in Afghanistan remains complex, the terrorist groups based in Afghanistan view the Taliban’s military success as a motivating factor for propaganda in neighbouring countries and other parts of the world,” the report stated.

The terror outfit is enjoying a comfortable stay in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime and some of its senior cadres are providing advisory services to the de facto government there.

“Al Qaeda leadership reportedly plays an advisory role with the Taliban, and the groups remain close,” the report stated.

Al Qaeda and IS pose varying levels of threats to international peace. IS-Khorasan, the group’s Afghanistan-based chapter, is seen as a bigger threat in the short and medium term, while Al Qaeda is a danger over the long term, the Dawn reported.

Sanaullah Ghafari alias Shahab al-Muhajir, an Afghan national, has been leading the IS-K chapter since June 2020. However, IS core has set up a separate structure called Al-Siddiq office under Sheikh Tamim al-Kurdi alias Abu Ahmed al-Madani for pursuing the group’s regional agenda.

The report said that Afghanistan is a base for expansion for IS, which is also trying to recruit fighters from other terrorist groups besides luring disaffected Taliban fighters and dissatisfied local ethnic minorities. The group, moreover, attracts fighters by offering higher wages than other militant groups operating there.

IS-K has increased its presence in northern and eastern Afghanistan. The group that initially started by recruiting members of Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan and Afghan Taliban now has in its ranks fighters from Central Asia, who have increased activities in the north, which borders Central Asian states of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, the report further noted.

The outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) with a strength of 3,000 to 4,000 fighters, is now more cohesive and presents a greater threat to the region, the report added. (ANI)

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	07/21 Nuclear power plants struggle to stay cool
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/nuclear-power-plants-struggling-to-stay-cool/

FROM ITS HUMBLE start as a glacial trickle in the Swiss Alps, the Rhône River quickly transforms into one of the world's most industrialized waterways. As it winds through the south of France toward the Mediterranean Sea, its chilly water is drawn into boilers, sucked through pipes as coolant, deviated for agriculture. Among its biggest customers is a battalion of nuclear reactors. Since the 1970s, the river and its tributaries have helped generate about a quarter of France's atomic energy.

But in recent weeks that hasn't been the case. Amidst a slow-burning heat wave that has killed hundreds and sparked intense wildfires across Western Europe, and combined with already low water levels due to drought, the Rhône's water has gotten too hot for the job. It's no longer possible to cool reactors without expelling water downstream that's so hot as to extinguish aquatic life. So a few weeks ago, Électricité de France (EDF) began powering down some reactors along the Rhône and a second major river in the south, the Garonne. That's by now a familiar story: Similar shutdowns due to drought and heat occurred in 2018 and 2019. This summer's cuts, combined with malfunctions and maintenance on other reactors, have helped reduce France's nuclear power output by nearly 50 percent.

Of all the low-carbon energy sources that will likely be necessary to fight climate change, nuclear power is usually thought of as the least perturbable. It's the reinforcement that's called in when the weather doesn't cooperate for other zero-carbon energy sources, like wind and solar. But the nuclear industry faces its own climate risks.

Problems with water—too much of it or too little—are more commonly associated with hydroelectric dams, which have [struggled to maintain output](#) in drying places like the American West. But as the Swedish historian Per Högselius puts it, much of present-day nuclear engineering is not about splitting atoms, but about managing larger-scale aquatic concerns. Nuclear technicians are known to refer to their craft as a very complicated way of boiling water, producing steam that spins turbines. But much more is usually required to keep the reactor cool. That's why so many facilities are located by the sea and along big rivers like the Rhône.

Plenty of other industries are affected by hotter rivers, including big factories and power plants that run on coal and gas. But nuclear plants are unique because of their immense size and the central role they play in keeping energy grids online in places like France. And warming and dwindling rivers are not the only climate challenges they face. On the coasts, a combination of sea level rise and more frequent and intense storms means heightened flooding risks. Scientists have also pointed to other, more unusual challenges, like more frequent algal blooms and exploding jellyfish populations, which can clog up the water pipes.

Nuclear plants are also built to last well into the future, with lifespans that extend a half-century or more. Many were constructed in the 1970s and '80s—long before regulators thought to factor in climate-related threats they would eventually encounter, explains Natalie Kopytko, a researcher at the University of Leeds who has dug into nuclear regulatory frameworks to look for climate considerations. “I saw absolutely nothing about climate change, which was quite scary,” she says. Where Kopytko did see the climate invoked, the plans assumed that current weather patterns would hold well into the future.

Some of the current concerns about climate change are related to safety—and the sector has started making some moves to address them. After the Fukushima disaster in Japan, caused by the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami in 2011, the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) began drafting new rules to harden existing plants to climate threats, such as storms and sea level rise. The process [identified dozens of facilities](#) that could face flooding problems under extreme conditions. But in 2019 those plans were largely scuttled by the Republican-led leadership, who argued the costs were too high for the nuclear industry to adopt for such low-probability events. (“This decision is nonsensical,” Democrat-appointed commissioner Jeff Baran [wrote in a dissent](#) at the time.)

The nuclear industry and environmental groups continue to disagree on whether existing regulations capture the latest science, particularly on the topic of sea level rise. “There's a lot of margin on the safety side for nuclear plants,” says Doug True, chief nuclear officer of the Nuclear Energy Institute, a US-based industry group, adding that utilities regularly update their models on climate risks and have already undertaken extensive steps to protect their facilities from extreme weather.

But those climate threats are once again being discussed more openly as regulators in Europe and the US consider extending the lives of nuclear plants in order to fight climate change. In 2019, the NRC began approving 20-year extensions to some reactors—starting with the Turkey Point power plant in South Florida. Environmental groups filed interventions to halt the plan, arguing that a combination of more intense hurricanes and sea level rise would threaten the low-lying plant in ways that regulators had not adequately considered. In February, the NRC reversed the extension for Turkey Point and other plants pending a more extensive environmental review.

So far, most production cuts are due to warming waters—not just in the Rhône and Garonne, but in places like the Tennessee River in the US, and in the coastal seas where many more plants are sited. In recent years, nuclear plants across Northern Europe have been forced to shut down or reduce output because seawater became too warm to safely cool the reactor cores. Over the past decade, the Millstone power plant in Connecticut saw a series of shutdowns on hot summer days until regulators raised the temperature limit of its cooling waters by 5 degrees Fahrenheit.

Given the relative rarity of intense heat waves and outages due to storms, the climate-related hiccups have a small impact on energy production overall—affecting less than 1 percent of annual output for EDF on average, for example. But the impact is growing as temperatures continue to rise. In an analysis [published in Nature Energy](#) last summer, a Stanford researcher found that there had been eight times the number of heat-related outages in the 2010s compared with the 1990s. In a 2011 study on the impact of warming on nuclear cooling systems, EDF scientists [projected a 3 degree Celsius](#) increase in the Rhône’s temperature by 2050, spelling more potential for shutdowns during heat waves.

And those disruptions can come at critical times, like summer heat waves when demand for energy is high. In France, where nuclear power ordinarily supplies 80 percent of the country’s needs, the current shutdowns are arriving at an especially bad time, as Europe scrambles to shore up energy reserves because of gas and oil shortages due to the war in Ukraine.

Adapting the existing fleet can be difficult, says Thibault Laconde, CEO of Callendar, a Paris-based startup that advises companies on climate risk. It’s not possible to move a facility that has already been built, and plants are expensive to overhaul. It might be possible to redesign pipes to reach for deeper, colder water, or add in newer heat-exchange systems that reduce the need for water, as many French plants did after the country’s record-breaking 2003 heat wave. But the costs are typically large, and the gains in efficiency small, Laconde says.

Building from scratch is easier. “The key issue is when we start building new plants, how can we take into account the impact of climate change for the full lifespan of the plant to 2080 or 2100,” Laconde says, noting that France’s new generation of reactors, recently announced by President Emmanuel Macron, are mostly being built by the coasts. He adds that nuclear power works just fine in hotter climates, like Spain or the United Arab Emirates, because those plants were built to withstand it. “I believe it’s possible to adapt,” Laconde says.

In the US, the sole desert-based nuclear facility, the Palo Verde plant in Arizona, relies on municipal wastewater rather than rivers or seas, though the facility has struggled with rising costs as more industries compete for limited supplies. Doug True of NEI puts more stock in a proposed new generation of smaller nuclear reactors, some of which use molten salts or air-based cooling and are less dependent on having water sources on hand.

In the meantime, in France, regulators are expecting a long summer ahead. While the heat may pass, low water levels can persist, resulting in cutbacks that last for weeks or months. EDF recently [told reporters](#) that it expects more cuts in the coming months as water levels continue to fall—leaving the country hoping for the relief of cold, hard rains.

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SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/22/australia-dead-frogs-environment-climate-change/
GIST	<p>MELBOURNE, Australia — Jodi Rowley squelched through a pond in rain boots, her headlamp piercing the blackness of the winter night. Following the sound of croaks, she and her three colleagues scanned the water for signs of life.</p> <p>With swabs on hand, the team gathered samples from the 22 little frogs they found on that expedition near Albury, in southern New South Wales, this month in the hope of deciphering a phenomenon that is perplexing animal lovers and scientists.</p> <p>“It is a really complicated murder mystery,” Rowley said.</p> <p>Across Australia, dead frogs are turning up in their thousands — and no one knows why.</p> <p>It started last winter, when Rowley, a herpetologist, noticed increased social media reports of frog carcasses in backyards and local creeks. She was concerned, but knew that amphibians’ immune systems slow down in the cold — and it was a cold year.</p> <p>But a call-out for citizen data brought in a flood of dead-frog sightings far beyond normal winter losses. Frogs, which usually bunker down during cooler weather — the middle of the year in Australia — were apparently wandering out into the open, sitting down, and dying en masse.</p> <p>“Property holders were saying that they’ve never seen this, but there’s dozens of dead frogs all over their house,” said Rowley, herpetology department lead at the Australian Museum and University of New South Wales. More than 1,600 reports came in, covering more than 40 species around the country, many detailing multiple deaths.</p> <p>After a summer reprieve, the phenomenon seems to be back this winter.</p> <p>“I was bracing myself for the possibility it would happen again,” Rowley said. “And unfortunately, it does look like it.”</p> <p>Australia is home to more than 240 native species of frog. They include such delights as the pobblebonk, named onomatopoeically, and the tiny assa wollumbin, found on one mountain, with males that carry tadpoles in kangaroo-style pouches. They come in black-and-yellow stripes, spooky ghost-white, and for the most ubiquitous species — the green tree frog — the color of the rainforest. They are everywhere, from the desert to the snowy Australian Alps, often heard but not seen.</p> <p>“They’re cryptic, and they hide, but they’re out there in really huge numbers,” said Karrie Rose, manager of the Taronga Conservation Society’s Australian Registry of Wildlife Health. “If their populations change, there will be ripples throughout the food web.”</p> <p>Frogs are indicators of the health of an ecosystem as a whole. They are eaten by birds, reptiles, even dingoes. And they keep the environment in balance by eating algae and insects. One study linked a decline in frogs to a rise in malaria in two countries, as fewer frogs snacked on disease-carrying mosquitoes.</p> <p>In Australia, at least four frog species have gone extinct since European colonization. They include the only two species worldwide known to have the bizarre trait of laying eggs, eating them, and then vomiting up tadpoles through their mouths. Almost one in five surviving species are threatened, and Rowley said she fears the mass mortality events could drive additional species to extinction.</p> <p>Rose, a veterinary pathologist, is working with Rowley to study the frogs’ demise.</p> <p>The lead suspect is a killer that attacks by smothering its victim’s skin.</p> <p>Chytrid fungus — <i>batrachochytrium dendrobatidis</i> — has ripped through amphibian populations since the latter part of last century. Scientists believe it originated on the Korean Peninsula and spread worldwide</p>

through trade. The fungus, which feeds on the keratin in frogs' outer layer, threatens the survival of more than 500 types of amphibian, a 2019 [study](#) found. It is thought to be responsible for 90 extinctions since the 1970s, making it a more destructive invasive species than rats or cats.

Rowley and Rose believe the fungus is probably playing a role in the inexplicable die-off. But they doubt it's the whole story. The fungus has been present in Australia for decades, Rose said. And some autopsies revealed internal lesions on the frogs' nervous systems and hearts, which is not a usual symptom of fungal infection. Something in the environment must have changed.

"There's been good evidence of widespread chytrid fungus infection since about the mid-1980s. So why are we seeing such a high mortality now?" she said.

Of the hundreds of frozen frog carcasses her lab has analyzed, about 75 percent were infected with chytrid fungus. But that couldn't explain the fate of the other 25 percent.

The scientists are exploring several theories. One could be eastern Australia's rainy weather over the past two years, which is conducive to both fungi and frogs. A secondary disease, parasite, environmental toxin, or stressors from successive drought, fires and [floods](#) could also play a role.

Last winter, with Australian cities under coronavirus lockdown, Rowley and her herpetologist colleagues in Sydney were limited to studying frogs that happened to be in their neighborhoods, samples from sick frogs that Australians had taken to veterinary clinics, or frog carcasses that people had placed in freezers to be collected by experts. This year, Rowley is out in the field, racing to work out what is going on before frog populations are permanently affected.

She hopes a combination of institutional and citizen science will gather the data that will unlock the puzzle. Australians are being asked to record frog sounds and take pictures in their neighborhoods, using the Australian Museum's [FrogID app](#). "We do really need everyone's help, because it's a huge problem and it spans the entire continent," Rowley added.

Rowley, 42, has been specializing in the study of frogs since she was 18. She recalls the moment she "personally fell in love" with amphibians — "these beautiful, amazing, precious creatures that I almost couldn't believe were real when I first ventured out into Australia at night."

Now, the frogs' long-term prospects could hinge on Rowley solving the mystery of their mass deaths.

"If this keeps happening, if it does what it did last year this winter, then there could be really dire consequences for our amazing frogs," she said.

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HEADLINE	07/21 Super-rich 'absolute disregard for planet'?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jul/21/kylie-jenner-short-private-jet-flights-super-rich-climate-crisis
GIST	<p>Kylie Jenner has faced a torrent of criticism for her decision to take her private jet on a flight that lasted just 17 minutes. But the practice of taking brief journeys on luxury aircraft appears to be common among the rich and famous despite mounting concerns over the climate crisis.</p> <p>Jenner, the 24-year-old socialite and businesswoman, has faced online opprobrium after she posted an Instagram picture of herself and her partner, rapper Travis Scott, on the runway of an airport between two private jets with the caption "you wanna take mine or yours?"</p> <p>According to an automated Twitter account that tracks celebrity flights based on transponders and tail fin marking, Jenner's flight on 12 July lasted just 17 minutes, taking her from Van Nuys in Los Angeles to the nearby town of Camarillo. The model had earlier taken a 27-minute trip in her jet, a \$72m Bombardier BD 700, to Van Nuys from Thermal, California.</p>

She was subsequently [attacked by Twitter users](#) for her “absolute disregard for the planet” and for being a “full time climate criminal”.

It’s estimated that her 17-minute jaunt would’ve resulted in a ton of carbon dioxide emissions, which, while in itself not a huge amount, is about a quarter of the total annual carbon footprint of the average person globally. The trip would have taken Jenner about 40 minutes in a car, causing just a fraction of the emissions.

But Jenner – who took an even shorter flight, lasting just nine minutes, between the same two locations in June – is far from the only celebrity to make short hops using private aircraft rather than driving or using public transport.

A review of the Celebrity Jets tracking account shows that just in the past month, the rapper [Drake](#) took an 18-minute flight from Hamilton, Ontario to Toronto; Kenny Chesney, the country music singer, was in the air for just 20 minutes between Akron, Ohio and Pittsburgh and the actor Mark Wahlberg took a 23-minute flight from Dublin to County Clare in Ireland, among other short trips.

Many of these brief flights are to “park” an aircraft at a convenient or less expensive location, or are part of a longer, two-part journey, but many appear to have an unclear rationale, such as the decision of Floyd Mayweather, the boxer, to fly 14 minutes from Las Vegas to nearby Henderson, then to fly [10 minutes back on Sunday](#).

“I’m not surprised people are upset, they are right to be mad at this,” said Jack Sweeney, creator of the Celebrity Jets account, which uses data from a company that tracks aircraft transponders.

Sweeney, a student at the University of Central Florida, has a [similar account](#) that just tracks the private jet of Elon Musk, the multi-billionaire head of Tesla. In May, Musk [took](#) a 28-minute flight in his jet between Houston and Austin, Texas, but Sweeney believes he should be judged differently for this.

“With Elon he’s just trying to be as quick as possible and efficient for work, but someone like Kim Kardashian (who has taken long and short private jet flights) is posting ‘Kim Air’ and flexing and all that,” he said.

Private jets are responsible for around 4% of all aviation emissions, according to a 2016 study, with the airline industry keen to point out that flying in general comprises [just a small fraction](#) of the overall sources of planet-heating gases.

However, private aircraft still emit [more than 33m tonnes of greenhouse gases](#), more than the country of Denmark, and because they carry so few people they are five to 14 times more polluting than commercial planes, per passenger, and 50 times more polluting than trains, [researchers have found](#).

“These startlingly short flights show the immense impact of the wealthy in overall aviation emissions,” said Scott Hochberg, an attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity’s Climate Law Institute.

“The problem starts at the top with Kylie Jenner and other celebrities with private jets, which have a much larger impact than commercial aircraft on a per passenger basis. But it also includes many others, as the US constitutes the bulk of the wealthy elite that have the luxury of flying.”

Emissions from private jets flown in the US [have surged since the 1990s](#) and will balloon further as larger and more polluting aircraft come onto the market. Short trips using private jets are not solely an American phenomenon; in 2019, one tenth of all flights departing France were private jets, with half traveling less than 500km. The frequent use of aviation is the domain of the world’s wealthy, with just 1% of the global population responsible for half of the emissions associated with flying.

	<p>“There are plenty of alternatives to private jets and wanting to avoid traveling with the hoi polloi isn’t a good enough reason for excessive pollution,” said Nikita Pavlenko, fuels team lead at the International Council on Clean Transportation.</p> <p>“These short flights have emissions that are small in relative terms but per person they are staggering. Aviation emissions are growing exponentially year over year and private jet pollution is growing more than general aviation.”</p> <p>Major US airlines have announced climate plans that include commitments to ramp up the use of low-emission sustainable aviation fuels (or SAFs), such as cooking oil or hydrogen, with Joe Biden’s administration last year unveiling a goal of a 20% cut in aviation emissions by 2030. This target, however, is voluntary and there has been no significant shift by the industry towards lessening its climate impact.</p> <p>“Aviation decarbonization is largely all talk and little substance in the US,” said Pavlenko. “As for celebrities, they need to set a positive example and ditch the planes. At the very least, they should exhibit some leadership and use sustainable fuels or a zero emissions plane when that becomes available.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Oil, gas ‘staggering’ \$3B/day profits 50yrs
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jul/21/revealed-oil-sectors-staggering-profits-last-50-years
GIST	<p>The oil and gas industry has delivered \$2.8bn (£2.3bn) a day in pure profit for the last 50 years, a new analysis has revealed.</p> <p>The vast total captured by petrostates and fossil fuel companies since 1970 is \$52tn, providing the power to “buy every politician, every system” and delay action on the climate crisis, says Prof Aviel Verbruggen, the author of the analysis. The huge profits were inflated by cartels of countries artificially restricting supply.</p> <p>The analysis, based on World Bank data, assesses the “rent” secured by global oil and gas sales, which is the economic term for the unearned profit produced after the total cost of production has been deducted.</p> <p>The study has yet to be published in an academic journal but three experts at University College London, the London School of Economics and the thinktank Carbon Tracker confirmed the analysis as accurate, with one calling the total a “staggering number”. It appears to be the first long-term assessment of the sector’s total profits, with oil rents providing 86% of the total.</p> <p>Emissions from the burning of fossil fuels have driven the climate crisis and contributed to worsening extreme weather, including the current heatwaves hitting the UK and many other Northern hemisphere countries. Oil companies have known for decades that carbon emissions were dangerously heating the planet.</p> <p>“I was really surprised by such high numbers – they are enormous,” said Verbruggen, an energy and environmental economist at the University of Antwerp, Belgium, and a former lead author of an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report.</p> <p>“It’s a huge amount of money,” he said. “You can buy every politician, every system with all this money, and I think this happened. It protects [producers] from political interference that may limit their activities.”</p> <p>The rents captured by exploiting the natural resources are unearned, Verbruggen said: “It’s real, pure profit. They captured 1% of all the wealth in the world without doing anything for it.” The average annual profit from 1970-2020 was \$1tn but he said he expected this to be twice as high in 2022.</p> <p>The profit-grabbing is holding back the world’s action on the climate emergency, he said: “It’s really stripping money from the alternatives. In every country, people have so much difficulty just to pay the gas and electricity bills and oil [petrol] bill, that we don’t have money left over to invest in renewables.”</p>

Some of the rents go to governments as royalties, says Prof Paul Ekins, at University College London: “But the fact remains that, over the last 50 years, companies have made a huge amount of money by producing fossil fuels, the burning of which is the major cause of climate change. This is already causing untold misery round the world and is a major threat to future human civilisation.

“At the very least these companies should be investing a far greater share of their profits in moving to low-carbon energy than is currently the case. Until they do so their claims of being part of the low-carbon energy transition are among the most egregious [examples of greenwashing](#).”

Mark Campanale, at Carbon Tracker, said: “Not only is the scale of these rents eye-watering, but it is salient to note that, in the midst of a cost of living crisis caused by record oil and gas prices, this flow of money to a relatively small number of petrostates and energy companies is set to double this year. Shifting to a carbon-neutral energy system based on renewables is the only way to end this madness.”

The Guardian revealed in May that the world’s biggest [fossil fuel firms are planning scores of “carbon bomb” oil and gas projects](#) that would drive the climate past internationally agreed temperature limits with catastrophic global impacts. The fossil fuel industry also benefits from [subsidies of \\$16bn a day](#), according to the International Monetary Fund.

Verbruggen’s analysis used the [World Bank’s oil rent](#) and [gas rent data](#), which the bank compiles country-by-country and is expressed as percentage of global GDP. He then multiplied this by the [World Bank’s global GDP data](#) and adjusted for inflation to put all the figures in 2020 US dollars.

Verbruggen said oil-rich nations, such as Russia and those in the OPEC cartel, including Saudi Arabia, kept rents high by restricting supply: “They change the fundamentals of the markets.” Military action, such as the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and political action, such as the embargo on oil exports from Iran, had also increased the rents, he said. If all available oil and gas could be freely supplied to the market, the price of conventional oil would be \$20-30 a barrel, Verbruggen said, compared with about \$100 today.

There is [far more oil, gas and coal in existing reserves](#) than can be burned if the world is to limit global heating to 1.5C, the target agreed by nations in the Paris climate agreement in 2015. Campanale said: “To keep to 1.5C, this means [international oil companies alone] forgoing around \$100 trillion of potential revenues. You can see why oil oligarchs and nations controlled by political elites want to keep their fossil fuel rents, the source of their power.”

May Boeve, the head of campaign group 350.org, said: “These profits have enabled the fossil fuel industry to combat all efforts to switch our energy systems. We have to dismantle such rent-seeking systems and build our future based on accessible and distributed renewable energy that is more sustainable and democratic in every way.”

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HEADLINE	07/21 Monitor: monarch butterflies endangered
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/21/climate/monarch-butterflies-endangered-iucn.html
GIST	<p>North America’s monarch butterfly, whose showy looks and extraordinary migration have made it one of the continent’s most beloved insects, has been classified as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the world’s most comprehensive scientific authority on the status of species.</p> <p>The decision comes after decades of falling populations driven by losses in the plants they need as caterpillars and in the forests where adults spend the winter, combined with climate change, the assessment found. The authors reviewed about 100 studies, interviewed experts and applied criteria from the group’s Red List of Threatened Species to come up with their decision.</p> <p>“It’s been so sad to watch their numbers decline so much, so anything that might help them makes me happy, and I think that this designation might help them,” said Karen Oberhauser, a conservation biologist</p>

at the University of Wisconsin who has studied monarchs for more than 35 years and contributed to the assessment. “Although it’s sad that they need that help, that they’ve reached the point where this designation is warranted.”

The numbers of Western monarchs, which live west of the Rocky Mountains, plummeted by an estimated 99.9 percent between the 1980s and 2021. While they rebounded somewhat this year, they remain in great peril. Eastern monarchs, which make up most of the population in North America, dropped by 84 percent from 1996 to 2014. The new designation of endangered covers both populations.

In 2020, U.S. wildlife officials [found that monarchs were threatened with extinction](#) but declined to add them to the endangered species list because they said conservation of other species took priority.

Monarch caterpillars depend on milkweed, the only plants they can eat. After leaving their overwintering grounds, which for most monarchs are concentrated in just a few hectares of forest in central Mexico, females deposit eggs on milkweed plants from Texas to as far north as Canada in a multigenerational journey.

Habitat destruction in those Mexican forests was an early threat, said Anna Walker, an entomologist with the New Mexico BioPark Society who led the assessment. The Mexican government stepped in, creating a reserve in 1986 and expanding it in 2000. While concerns remain over illegal logging and disease, that conservation work has helped, she said, stemming the loss of overwintering habitat quite effectively.

But a new problem came along, the assessment noted: American farmers turned to crops that were genetically modified to withstand glyphosate, a herbicide that is used in the weed killer Roundup.

“Glyphosate was suddenly sprayed over vast acreage of farm in the Midwest,” Ms. Walker said. “That took out a lot of the milkweed plants that the monarch caterpillars rely on.”

Then there’s climate change, which worsens storms, droughts and other such events that can be catastrophic for the already vulnerable populations. Hot dry spring seasons in the south are of special concern to monarch experts. Add to that broader questions about climate change disrupting ancient cycles, such as when plants sprout.

“We’re starting to see this kind of mismatch between when insects are ready to start the spring and when plants are ready,” Ms. Walker said. “There are a ton of unknowns.”

A [recent study complicated the picture](#), finding that summer monarch abundance had declined in some areas while increasing in others, perhaps in part because warmer weather in northern areas were actually helping monarchs thrive in those regions. But even those authors indicated that any silver lining could be short-lived, warning that “accelerating climate change may bring growing threats.”

The Red List decision limits the endangered listing to migratory monarchs, which applies to those in North America. It came out of the group’s first assessment of these butterflies. The broader species includes a nonmigratory variety in the Caribbean and from southern Mexico into northern South America.

The North American monarchs’ migration is considered one of the natural world’s wonders: tiny insects flying thousands of miles north over the course of a few generations and back in just one generation, with single butterflies flying perhaps more than 2,500 miles.

Monarch experts are eager to enlist the public’s help in saving the species. Their message: Plant milkweed that’s native to your region, which probably means [avoiding tropical milkweed](#) (it can do more harm than good, especially in the South). [Swamp milkweed](#) is an attractive, easy-to-grow variety native to all but the most western areas of the contiguous United States. That’s for the egg-laying and caterpillars. The butterflies need nectar, so plant native flowers that bloom when monarchs are in your area.

Dr. Oberhauser credits such interventions with helping stabilize population numbers in recent years.

	<p>“We’re holding our own at a number that’s not quite sustainable,” she said. “But if we didn’t have all of these efforts on the part of a lot of different organizations and individuals, I think the numbers would be even lower.”</p> <p>The latest I.U.C.N. Red List update also held bad news for sturgeons: All surviving species are now at risk of extinction, up from 85 percent of species in 2009. The Yangtze sturgeon, a fish from China, has gone from critically endangered to extinct in the wild.</p> <p>Tiger numbers, on the other hand, showed a 40 percent increase since the previous assessment, which the organization attributes to better counting combined with stabilized or increasing numbers.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	07/21 First active-duty troop sentenced Jan 6 riot
SOURCE	https://www.military.com/daily-news/2022/07/21/first-active-duty-service-member-sentenced-jan-6-hit-lengthy-prison-time.html
GIST	<p>James Phillip Mault was in the National Guard when he assaulted police during the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. Four months after taking part in the riot to upend the 2020 presidential election, he reenlisted in the active-duty Army, according to service records.</p> <p>Mault, 30, who is still serving as an Army specialist, became the only active-duty service member convicted and sentenced for the pro-Trump attack after being arrested at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He was sentenced July 15 to three and a half years in prison for felony assault on law enforcement – one of the longest sentences among those convicted so far for Jan. 6.</p> <p>The case raises questions about the Army's ability to combat extremism, as well as its vetting of troops who want to reenlist, after court records showed Mault also had a conviction for driving while impaired.</p> <p>Federal prosecutors said he descended on the Capitol on Jan. 6 to violently overturn the election results and was interviewed by investigators just weeks later. But he was still able to rejoin the Army -- even as the Defense Department announced a new effort to root out extremism in the ranks.</p> <p>Mault is one of at least three National Guard members who assaulted the Capitol. Because he later reenlisted into the regular Army, he appears to be the first active-duty service member to be sentenced to prison in connection to the siege, according to data from George Washington University's Program on Extremism.</p> <p>On the afternoon of Jan. 6, Mault, along with thousands of other rioters, breached the Capitol building in an effort to disrupt or overturn the election certification of President Joe Biden, according to court filings.</p> <p>Mault, along with co-defendant Cody Mattice, 29, who does not have any known military connection, crawled over the top of other rioters toward a tunnel leading into the Capitol where law enforcement officers had retreated and were being assaulted by the crowd.</p> <p>It was there that Mault and Mattice pepper-sprayed Metropolitan and Capitol police officers who were attempting to defend the Capitol.</p> <p>Mault committed the assault while he was serving in the New York National Guard. His status as a Guard soldier may contribute to media reports referring to him simply as a veteran. But as far as the Army is concerned, Mault was on the military's part-time muster on Jan. 6 and, four months later, was a permanent, salaried member of the service.</p>

Mault initially enlisted in the active Army as a [Patriot](#) missile operator in 2012, according to military records. The following year, he deployed to Kuwait for a year and in 2016 transitioned into the New York National Guard as a combat engineer.

Two years later, while still serving in the Guard, he was convicted of driving while impaired, according to the criminal history listed in federal court documents related to his Jan. 6 sentencing, though the details of the conviction are unclear. The offense is [punishable](#) under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, but can be [waived](#) when enlisting into the regular military, depending on the severity of the case.

In May 2021, just four months after federal agents interviewed him for his involvement in the Jan. 6 attack, Mault reenlisted in the active-duty Army, where he is currently serving.

Military.com's attempts to contact Mault and his attorney, Richard S. Stern, were unsuccessful.

In addition to their sentences, Mault and Mattice owe \$2,000 in restitution for damages at the Capitol; the Department of Justice says the total cost is over \$1.4 million.

Mault does not have any known ties to extremist groups such as the Oath Keepers or Proud Boys, whose members now face seditious conspiracy charges related to Jan. 6. But his reenlistment came at a tenuous time for the DoD -- one month after Secretary Lloyd Austin [announced](#) an "immediate" initiative to counter extremism in the military.

"The [soldier's] command is aware of the conviction and is working the appropriate next steps," said Army spokesperson Matt Leonard. The military has been reluctant to take administrative action in cases of service members who are connected to Jan. 6 until convictions or sentencing.

The Army did not respond to a follow-up request for comment on how Mault was able to reenlist while under investigation for Jan. 6 and with a DWI. In October, HuffPost [reported](#) that the Army was not aware of his involvement in Jan. 6 prior to his reenlistment.

At least four days before the assault at the Capitol, both Mault and Mattice discussed traveling to Washington, D.C., from Rochester, New York, to attend former President Donald Trump's rally with the intent of meeting or inflicting violence, according to DoJ [filings](#).

A day before the attack, the co-defendants discussed bringing gear, with Mault recommending to several rioters through text that they bring long-sleeved shirts, gloves, knives, batons, pepper spray, "asskicking" boots, helmets and eye protection.

According to testimony from the FBI [special agent who investigated](#) the case, Mault's father drove him and at least five others to D.C. to attend the rally.

Mault was identified partly from video of his hard hat, which sported stickers from his ironworker job -- employment [he was fired from, according to The Washington Post](#). Mault claimed he brought the hard hat to protect himself from antifa -- a loosely organized far-left group that has caused disruption and property damage at U.S. protests -- according to the agent's statement.

An FBI special agent said it was an anonymous tip that identified Mault and that the tipster claimed to have seen a picture of him inside the Capitol.

Mattice filmed some of the pair's day, including recording himself that afternoon saying, "We're getting ready to go march on Capitol Hill. We're gonna go f--- some s--- up. It's about to be nuts."

He added, "Let's do this. Let's f---ing do this. I can't wait," while Mault stood beside him, according to DoJ filings.

	<p>Mault tried to convince officers to join the rioters during the initial afternoon breach of the police line.</p> <p>"Your jobs will be here when you come back after we kick the s--- out of everyone," he said. Hours later, he would stand above a crowd of rioters at the opening of the Lower West Terrace tunnel of the Capitol and discharge pepper spray into the group of law enforcement officers blocking the entrance.</p> <p>Less than two weeks later, Mault admitted to federal agents that he was at the Capitol on Jan. 6, though he claimed to have been pushed toward the building by the crowd and denied that he had assaulted anyone. In October, after video surfaced showing the assault, he was arrested at Fort Bragg, according to court documents.</p> <p>More than 850 people have been arrested in connection to the Capitol attack. Over 260 have been charged with assaulting law enforcement.</p> <p>The Department of Defense has come under scrutiny due to the number of Jan. 6 participants connected to the military. Six of the 11 Oath Keepers members indicted on seditious conspiracy charges are veterans, including the group's leader Stewart Rhodes. Four of the five Proud Boys indicted on those charges are veterans.</p> <p>George Washington's Program on Extremism reports that, as of July, the federal government has leveled federal charges against 102 individuals with known military connections -- roughly 12% of total individuals charged. Other researchers estimate that closer to 120 rioters had military connections, but may be including those who were separated at basic training.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 WA homicides highest in nearly 30yrs
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3571991/homicides-in-wa-highest-in-nearly-30-years-violent-crime-on-the-rise/
GIST	<p>Violent crime is up 12.3% year-over-year, according to a new report from the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.</p> <p>The report collects data from nearly every law enforcement agency statewide.</p> <p>Homicides are at an all-time high as 325 people were murdered in Washington state in 2021, approximately 6% more than the year before. Per capita, the state saw more homicides in both the mid-'80s and '90s.</p> <p>And a big reason for the rise in crime rates is the staffing shortage many departments are facing.</p> <p>"Violent crime is way up and I think that's simply a function of fewer police," Bryan Suits said on the Bryan Suits Show. "This report shows very concerning increases in both violent and hate crimes, and at the same time, the state lost nearly 500 law enforcement officers last year."</p> <p>The report says the state officially lost 495 commissioned officers last year.</p> <p>Steve Strachan, the executive director of WASPC, says the uptick in violent crime is happening as the state is dealing with the fewest number of officers per capita in 40 years — which is how long the agency has been tracking the data.</p> <p>"It's no secret that this has been a difficult time for all of us, including law enforcement and we encourage people we have a very active recruiting program and State Patrol," Inslee said at a press conference. "We're focusing on increasing diversity, which I'm pleased about making some progress yesterday."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Warning: fake gold jewelry scam
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SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/we-lost-our-money-family-warns-of-couple-using-fake-jewelry-to-steal-thousands-of-dollars
GIST	<p>BREMERTON, Wash. - A family is warning others of a scam they fell victim to, where a couple said they were from a foreign country and needed money. The family offered it to them and took what they thought was real gold jewelry as collateral for later payback-- but they learned the hard way and are now out thousands of dollars.</p> <p>The scam has been reported in two counties and three cities in western Washington.</p> <p>According to the Melocoton family, a couple who identified themselves and Ali and Samirah Kalifa, asked for help in the Bremerton Walmart parking lot on July 16, saying they were from Saudi Arabia and were stuck without access to their credit cards.</p> <p>The family initially offered the couple \$40, before ending up giving them \$200. The couple said \$200 wasn't enough.</p> <p>The couple then gave the family several gold chains as "collateral."</p> <p>"She just kept throwing jewelry, so I thought it was real," said Babylyn Melocoton.</p> <p>The couple promised to pay them back \$5,000 if the family gave them \$2,000 in cash.</p> <p>So, the Melocotons went to two separate ATMS to withdraw a total of \$2,000. Once they handed the cash to the couple, they took off immediately.</p> <p>The family drove to a pawn shop to try and figure out how much the chains, rings and bracelet were worth-- they were worth nothing.</p> <p>"That's the only money that I have. I saved that money for three years," Babylyn Melocoton. "We lost our money."</p> <p>She planned on using those savings for her 7-year-old and 3-year-old's education.</p> <p>"If you think it's too good of a deal, then it's probably is," said Lt. Kenneth Dickinson with the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office.</p> <p>The Sheriff Office's says they are aware of the incident with the Melocoton family.</p> <p>The Melocotons are not the only ones who have been scammed: the Kent police department says a similar report was filed middle of June after a man claimed to have lost his wallet, needing to feed his family and offering the victim \$1,000 for a gold chain.</p> <p>Renton PD has seen two incidents-- one in February, where the first victim says two men were selling fake jewelry at a gas station near Third Street, and the second in May where the victim told police a man and two children were asking people for money in exchange for jewelry.</p> <p>So far, no one has been arrested for these crimes.</p>
Return to Top	<i>If you have any information on the incident in Bremerton or believe you have seen the suspects, contact the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office at 360-337-7101.</i>

HEADLINE	07/21 Arrests: fentanyl pill manufacturing lab
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/2-marysville-residents-arrested-after-discovery-fentanyl-pill-manufacturing-lab/6NVURCXB7FCNJEITXA5BQRM5V4/

GIST	<p>Two Marysville residents were arrested Thursday after they were found to be manufacturing counterfeit oxycodone pills using fentanyl and a pill press, U.S. Attorney Nick Brown announced.</p> <p>Jose Eduardo Garnica and Lauren Malina Wilson were charged Thursday with conspiracy to manufacture and distribute fentanyl, and possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute.</p> <p>Both are currently in custody at the Federal Detention Center in Seatac.</p> <p>According to a criminal complaint, Garnica and Wilson garnered the attention of law enforcement on June 17, when U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers in Los Angeles inspected a package from China to Garnica's Marysville address.</p> <p>The package was labeled "furniture parts," but contained die sets for use in a pill press that made pills with the markings of legitimate oxycodone pills.</p> <p>Further investigation of two suspects showed unusual cash transactions and 11 firearms purchases in a three-month span in 2020.</p> <p>On Thursday, agents with Homeland Security and the FBI executed search warrants at the Marysville residence. A pill press and other materials used for making fake oxycodone pills were seized from the garage.</p> <p>Garnica and Wilson were both arrested at the scene.</p> <p>Officers called in a hazmat team to secure the lab due to the potentially deadly nature of fentanyl powder. The investigation of that scene is ongoing.</p> <p>Law enforcement also found multiple suspected fake oxycodone pills in the Garnica and Wilson's cars.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Gig Harbor construction site fire is arson
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/fire-gig-harbor-construction-site-ruled-arson/IDO3Y3HAVJEB5P4JMMQGO65MIU/
GIST	<p>The fire that erupted at a construction site in Gig Harbor on Sunday morning has been ruled arson, the Pierce County Fire Marshal's Office has determined.</p> <p>The Cove is part of Gig Harbor's push to build more housing. The development is still being built, but two of the newly promised homes were destroyed in the fire.</p> <p>Now, the search is on to find out who did it and why.</p> <p>"It's kind of scary because we live just down here, we just saw the smoke," said Gig Harbor resident Antonio Chavez. "We thought it was a wildfire. We never thought it was going to be that."</p> <p>The chaotic scene took place not too far from Chavez's home on Sunday. Two homes under construction went up in flames, torching the wooden structures and melting nearby plastic.</p> <p>The Pierce County Fire Marshal's Office has now determined that the fire was set on purpose. Two homes that were meant to be part of The Cove housing development are now destroyed.</p> <p>Other residents say the development has been a point of concern for neighbors.</p> <p>Julie Ammann said that the construction site replaced trees and surrounding nature.</p>

	“No one’s happy to see the development, at all,” Ammann said. “But of course, we don’t want houses burning down either.”
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HEADLINE	07/21 New county jail program: culinary training
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/snohomish-county-jail-job-inmate-program-culinary-skills-training/281-80a571ed-967a-4ea0-881f-25e427a8ce15
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. — A new program at the Snohomish County Jail is aiming to prevent inmates from returning once they're released by teaching them skills in the kitchen.</p> <p>There are a lot of lessons to be learned in jail. For Saul Ray Cobian Osorio those lessons are quite personal.</p> <p>"I'm learning to be more positive, be more patient. I'm really just focusing on being a better person," he said.</p> <p>Cobian Osorio has been in and out of jail for much of his life. Right now he's serving a nine-month sentence for violating a protection order. He's due out on Aug. 22.</p> <p>When he leaves this time he'll bring with him something he's never had before -- a belief in himself.</p> <p>"I'm seeing the value in myself," he said. "People like me here, so that motivates me to keep pushing, to keep on going."</p> <p>Cobian Osorio is part of a new culinary program at the Snohomish County jail. It's a 10-week course sponsored by the jail's food service company, Aramark.</p> <p>It doesn't cost the county anything.</p> <p>Cobian Osorio is learning his way around a kitchen -- how to cook, clean and store food safely.</p> <p>When he graduates from the program he'll have a food handlers permit and kitchen safety certificate - two important steps toward working in a restaurant.</p> <p>"We believe the path to redemption doesn't have to start when they get released. It can start in here," said Jail Chief Jamie Kane.</p> <p>Kane believes the program provides more than just a course in culinary competency.</p> <p>"It gives a sense of pride, a sense of belonging, a sense of being part of something. It helps them in going down that road of self-worth that a lot of inmates lose when they become incarcerated."</p> <p>Cobian Osorio believes the program will help him stay out of jail for good, and begin providing for his 11-year-old daughter.</p> <p>When released he plans to work at his family's Seattle restaurant, and maybe open his own one day.</p> <p>For now, he keeps learning those lessons - hoping they will feed a healthier future.</p> <p>"Hopefully this will be the last time I'm in here. That's what I'm aiming for," he said. "Right now, I'm just really just focused on a better way, a better road."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Portland gun violence reduction initiative
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Amid-spike-in-shootings-Portland-unveils-new-17321160.php

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Grippled by gun violence that's affecting cities across the nation, the mayor of Portland, Oregon, on Thursday issued a new emergency declaration with the goal of reducing gun killings by at least 10% over the next two years.

The initiative directs \$2.4 million to community groups and prevention efforts.

"Emergency declarations can get results the status quo cannot," Wheeler said during a briefing at City Hall. "We will not stop until the gun violence stops."

The number of shootings in Oregon's biggest city soared above 670 in the first half of 2022 - ahead of the pace for the same period last year.

Guns have been fueling a surge of deadly violence in Portland in a trend that's been playing out across the U.S. Firearm homicide rates nationwide jumped 35% between 2019 and 2020, the highest rate in more than 25 years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In the face of growing violence, many cities are now trying to navigate how to maintain public safety while also addressing the calls to reform and "defund" the police sparked by George Floyd's murder, as racial justice activists seek to have police budgets reallocated to other social services.

Portland, which was roiled by near-nightly Black Lives Matter protests for months in 2020, cut the city's police budget by \$15 million that year. But in November it reversed course, funneling \$5.2 million back to the police department as homicides skyrocketed.

At the briefing, Portland Police Chief Chuck Lovell announced that 16 new police officers were sworn in on Thursday in what he described as the "largest new hire event we've had in a very, very long time." The officers are part of the 300 additional police bureau staff the city aims to hire over the next three years.

But despite the recent recruits and funding bumps, Lovell said personnel shortages are hampering his department's ability to fight crime.

"It's one of our high priorities to bring the staffing level at the bureau back up," said Lovell. "We are working as hard as we can to solve these cases."

Signaling a shift away from the city's recent cuts to its police budget in 2020, Wheeler said he plans on increasing the department's funds. "As long as this crisis exists, there will be funding," Wheeler said.

The initiative aims to enhance and centralize cooperation between law enforcement and community groups with the goal of increasing outreach to individuals at risk of being involved in gun violence.

Wheeler's emergency declaration came in response to a report released by the Portland Police Bureau and the California Partnership for Safe Communities, a nonprofit that advises cities on reducing gun violence. The report found that last year Portland had a homicide rate of 13.5 per 100,000 people, roughly double the nationwide rate.

The number of homicides in Portland surpassed more populous cities like San Francisco and Boston. The Oregon city had twice as many slayings compared to its larger Pacific Northwest neighbor Seattle.

Portland reported a record 89 homicides last year, a 65% increase compared to 2020, according to the Portland Police Bureau. The vast majority of those homicides involved a firearm.

Shootings in Portland disproportionately affect communities of color. Black people make up just 6% of the city's population, but account for nearly 39% of homicide victims.

	<p>Communities across the U.S. are grappling with the spike in shootings, with many still reeling from a string of killings that targeted a Fourth of July parade in a Chicago suburb, Black shoppers at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, and children at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.</p> <p>Congress last month to pass its most significant gun violence bill in 30 years. The legislation will enhance background checks for gun buyers under 21 years of age, toughen laws preventing domestic violence offenders from obtaining firearms, and provide billions in funding for mental health and crisis intervention programs in communities and schools.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Seattle police: deadly road-rage incident
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/man-killed-in-road-rage-shooting-in-seattles-industrial-district-police-say/
GIST	<p>A man shot and killed another man in an apparent road rage incident Thursday in the Industrial District, Seattle police say.</p> <p>Officers received a report at 10:13 a.m. about a man who had been shot in the 4400 block of Fourth Avenue South, the Seattle Police Department said in its online blotter. Witnesses told officers the men had been involved in a road rage incident that escalated into a shooting, according to police.</p> <p>Authorities aided a 68-year-old man suffering from a gunshot wound to the stomach. He was taken to Harborview Medical Center, where he died.</p> <p>The suspect, 38, reported the incident to 911 and remained at the scene to give officers a statement, police said. He wasn't arrested.</p> <p>Detective Valerie Carson, a police spokesperson, said she wasn't immediately able to say why the man wasn't arrested, noting that it's likely detectives need to investigate further or didn't have probable cause to make an arrest at the scene.</p> <p>The incident remains under investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Racial inequality gap long prison sentences
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/21/prisons-us-racial-equality-black-white-americans
GIST	<p>The gap between Black and white Americans serving time in state prison for long prison sentences is growing, a new analysis of state data shows.</p> <p>Between 2005 and 2019, the share of Black Americans newly sentenced to state prison for more than 10 years grew from about 13% in 2005 to 19% in 2019. By comparison, during that same period, white Americans taken to state prison for long sentences grew from about 12% to 15%, according to a new report by the Council on Criminal Justice, a nonpartisan thinktank.</p> <p>Researchers found that, in 2019, 17% of people were sentenced to prison on new charges for longer than 10 years. Of those released, just 3% had sentences longer than 10 years. Yet those numbers compound over time.</p> <p>The report, the first in a series by the council, analyzed data from 29 states reported to the Justice Department's National Corrections Reporting Program, accounting for more than half of the US population.</p> <p>"Long sentences accounts for one of the key ways we use incarceration," John Maki, executive director of the Council on Criminal Justice, said in a briefing. "This is a ground-level understanding of what we know but it points to how much we don't know about long sentences. There's a lot more work to do."</p>

It found that by the end of 2019, more than half of people in prison – 57% – were serving sentences longer than 10 years, an increase from 46% in 2005, researchers discovered. During that time, the average length grew from almost 10 years to nearly 16 years.

Black Americans were more likely than white Americans to receive long prison sentences for violent crimes such as murder, rape and sexual assault, as well as robbery and burglary. For drug sentences, a shift occurred between 2005 and 2019: white Americans were more likely to receive extended prison sentences in 2005, but by 2019 Black Americans account for the larger share.

“People of color are getting harsher sentences for the same crime,” says Amy Fetting, a task force member and executive director of the Sentencing Project, a nonprofit advocating for the reduction of bias in the criminal justice system.

She said that even as crime overall has declined for decades, disparities in extended prison sentences have gone up, not just within the state prison system but also in the juvenile justice system.

“Even as crime went down, extreme sentences went up. The harshness of our sentences isn’t related to public safety,” Fetting says. “It’s politics in America and it’s racism. Anyway you slice, if you don’t account for racism, you don’t understand what’s truly going on.”

The report did not analyze how disparities broke down across race, age, and sex. But researchers also found that men were 72% more likely to receive long prison sentences than women. The percentage of people older than 55 sentenced to prison more than doubled from 2005 to 2019, from 8% to 19% in 2019. At the same time, the percentage of people between 18 and 24 fell 35%.

“We are guarding grandpa and grandma even though we know they are not a public safety risk,” Fetting says. “[The prison system] isn’t equipped to be an elder care institution. It’s not equipped for long-term care.”

The council formed a Task Force on Long Sentences, co-chaired by former US attorney general Sally Yates and former Republican congressman Trey Gowdy, in April, to examine the impact extended prison sentences have on public safety, communities and incarcerated families. The task force plans to offer recommendations by December.

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HEADLINE	07/21 Hate crimes against Asian-Americans surge
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/21/asian-americans-hate-incidents-study
GIST	<p>Forty years after Vincent Chin, a Chinese American man, was scapegoated and beaten to death by two white men in Detroit, angered over the loss of American jobs to Japanese companies during an economic downturn, hate incidents against Asian Americans continue to surge, a new study released Wednesday found.</p> <p>Between March 2020 and March 2022, more than 11,400 hate incidents against Asian Americans have been reported across the United States, a report found by Stop AAPI Hate, a national coalition that tracks such incidents and advocates for combatting hate crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.</p> <p>The findings signaled a persistent rise in harassment, verbal abuse and hate speech that have plagued Asian communities since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021, the group identified more than 9,000 hate incidents in the pandemic’s first year. A separate study by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism found that hate crimes against Asian Americans rose 339% nationally between 2020 and 2021.</p> <p>Two-thirds of incidents reported to Stop AAPI Hate between March 2020 and 2022 involved some form of verbal or written harassment, while another two in five incidents occurred in public spaces. Women</p>

were twice as likely to report hate incidents as men. Seventeen per cent of incidents were physical assaults, and nearly one in 10 occurred on public transit.

A national survey conducted by Stop AAPI Hate and Edelman Data & Intelligence found that one in five Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders experienced a hate incident in the past two years. It also showed that those experiences led to a rise in fear around those incidents: Nearly half of respondents reported feeling depression and anxiety.

California, which has the [largest population](#) of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the country, accounted for the highest number of reported incidents, with over 4,000, followed by New York and Washington state.

In response to the [escalating reports](#) of anti-Asian violence and anti-Asian rhetoric, Joe Biden signed the Covid-19 Hate Crimes Act in March 2021, which incentivizes police departments to improve data collection on hate incidents and develop better practices to prevent and respond to hate crimes. But critics [told the Guardian](#) that the law fails to get to the root cause of the violence and that it could lead to over-policing in communities.

The report's authors [called](#) on public officials to extend civil rights protections to cover incidents that occur on public transit and businesses, expand ethnic studies courses on Asian American history, and "invest in community-based programs to support the healing of victims and survivors, and to prevent violence before it starts".

"Even as people move on past the Covid-19 pandemic, AAPIs continue to be harassed because of their race," Manjusha Kulkarni, co-founder of Stop AAPI Hate and executive director of AAPI Equity Alliance, said in a [statement](#). "The AAPI community is tired of being afraid. We want solutions that actually make a difference and focus on prevention."

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HEADLINE	07/21 Ex-officer Floyd case receives prison term
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/21/us/george-floyd-thomas-lane-sentenced.html
GIST	<p>ST. PAUL, Minn. — Thomas Lane, a former Minneapolis police officer who held down George Floyd's legs as he gasped for air while dying under the knee of another officer, was sentenced to two and a half years in prison on Thursday.</p> <p>A federal judge in St. Paul handed down the sentence to Mr. Lane several months after a jury found him guilty of violating Mr. Floyd's rights by not providing him with medical care after Derek Chauvin, the other officer, knelt on his neck for more than nine minutes. The sentence means Mr. Lane, who is also waiting to be sentenced over a state manslaughter charge, will be the second officer imprisoned over Mr. Floyd's death, which set off a summer of protests across the United States in 2020.</p> <p>Mr. Lane, 39, was in his first week on the job as a full officer when he and three other officers arrived at a South Minneapolis convenience store on May 25, 2020, in response to a 911 caller who said that Mr. Floyd had used a fake \$20 bill to buy cigarettes. Officers handcuffed Mr. Floyd and then forced him to the ground when he resisted being put in the back of a police car and said he was claustrophobic and could not breathe.</p> <p>Mr. Floyd continued to say he could not breathe as officers put him face down on the pavement and Mr. Chauvin began to kneel on his neck. Mr. Lane held on to his legs as a third officer, J. Alexander Kueng, also held Mr. Floyd down with his knee. By the time emergency medical workers arrived, they could not detect any pulse from Mr. Floyd.</p> <p>All four Minneapolis police officers who were at the scene were charged with various crimes. Mr. Chauvin is serving a 21-year prison sentence after a jury found him guilty of murdering Mr. Floyd; he later pleaded guilty to violating Mr. Floyd's rights. Mr. Lane and Mr. Chauvin are white, while Mr. Kueng is Black and a fourth officer, Tou Thao, who kept bystanders from intervening, is Asian American. Mr.</p>

	<p>Floyd, 46, was Black and was a former security guard who had lost his job at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>During the arrest, Mr. Lane twice asked Mr. Chauvin if they should roll Mr. Floyd onto his side so that he could breathe more easily, but he was rebuffed by Mr. Chauvin. Prosecutors had charged him with fewer crimes than they pursued against the other officers, and they asked the judge to sentence Mr. Lane to between about five and six and a half years in prison, less than they have sought in the other cases.</p> <p>Mr. Lane pleaded guilty to a state charge of aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter in May and is expected to be sentenced in September. His lawyers and state prosecutors have agreed to recommend a sentence of three years in prison, though a judge will ultimately decide.</p> <p>A video of the police pinning Mr. Floyd to the ground — recorded by Darnella Frazier, who was 17 at the time — challenged the police's initial narrative that Mr. Floyd had died following a "medical incident" and quickly set off protests in the Twin Cities and, shortly after, across the country. The movement soon became one of the largest protests in U.S. history as millions of people marched to oppose racism and police abuse in thousands of cities. In some cities, the protests turned destructive; hundreds of buildings in Minneapolis were damaged, and a Minneapolis police precinct was among the buildings burned to the ground.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Man walks up to NY police: opens fire
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/police-officers-shot-life-threatening-condition-report/story?id=87225622
GIST	<p>Two police officers have been shot in Rochester, New York, and one is in life-threatening condition Thursday night.</p> <p>The two officers were conducting a detail around 9:15 p.m. when "at least one male approached them and opened fire on them," Lt. Greg Bello said at the scene Thursday night, Rochester ABC affiliate WHAM reported.</p> <p>Police investigate the scene of the shooting of 2 RPD officers in northeast Rochester, New York, July 21, 2022.</p> <p>The condition of the other officer was not immediately known. Both were rushed to the hospital.</p> <p>The incident took place on Bauman Street in northeast Rochester, WHAM reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Man attacks GOP nominee for NY governor
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/gop-candidate-ny-governor-attacked-knife-uninjured-87221668
GIST	<p>NEW YORK -- U.S. Rep. Lee Zeldin, the Republican candidate for New York governor, was assaulted by a man who apparently tried to stab him at an upstate event Thursday but the congressman escaped serious injury.</p> <p>"I'm OK," Zeldin said in a statement. "Fortunately, I was able to grab his wrist and stop him for a few moments until others tackled him."</p> <p>Zeldin's campaign said the attacker was taken into custody and the congressman continued his speech. He is challenging incumbent Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul this November.</p> <p>The attacker climbed onto a low stage where the congressman spoke to a crowd of dozens outside Rochester, flanked by bales of hay and American flags. A video posted on Twitter shows the two falling to the ground as other people try to intervene.</p>

Among those who helped to subdue the attacker was Zeldin's running mate, former New York Police Department Deputy Inspector Alison Esposito, said state GOP Chair Nick Langworthy.

Langworthy told The Associated Press that he didn't have any details on the attacker or his weapon but exchanged text messages with Zeldin afterward while the congressman was speaking to police.

"He is fine. He's not seriously injured. It's just a chaotic scene there," Langworthy said. He said Zeldin had "just a little scrape" but it wasn't what anyone would consider an injury.

In a statement, Hochul condemned the attack and said she was "relieved to hear that Congressman Zeldin was not injured and that the suspect is in custody."

Deputy Brendan Hurley, the Monroe County Sheriff's Office spokesperson, gave a statement to the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle that said the office "is aware of an incident at the speech of gubernatorial candidate Zeldin this evening. A suspect is in custody and Major Crimes is investigating."

Messages seeking information from the Monroe County District Attorney's Office were not immediately returned, and phone messages were left with the county's emergency dispatch.

Langworthy called on Hochul to issue a security detail for Zeldin to protect him on the campaign trail.

"This could have gone a lot worse. This could have really ended in a horrible way tonight and this is unacceptable," he said.

Hochul's press secretary Avi Small referred questions about providing Zeldin with a security detail to New York state police.

Zeldin, an Army Reserve lieutenant colonel who has represented eastern Long Island in Congress since 2015, is a staunch ally of former President Donald Trump and was among the Republicans in Congress who voted against certifying the 2020 election results.

He has focused his campaign on fighting crime but faces an uphill battle against Hochul. He'll need to persuade independent voters — which outnumber Republicans in the state — as well as Democrats in order to win the general election.

Democrats are expected to focus on Zeldin's vocal defense of Trump during both of his impeachments and objection to the election results.

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